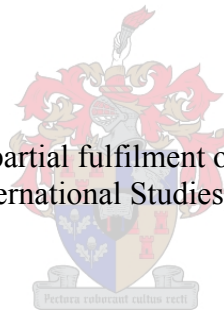


# **POST APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA AT THE UNITED NATIONS: PATTERNS AND IMPLICATIONS**

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the degree of Master of Arts (International Studies) at the University of Stellenbosch



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## DECLARATION

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## **ABSTRACT**

South Africa has played an essential role as one of the founding members of both the League of Nations and the United Nations (UN), the latter of which came into existence in 1945. However, when the South African government introduced and pursued its policy of Apartheid, the country became a pariah within the international community. In 1994, after twenty years of international isolation, a new democratic government was sworn in and was immediately embraced by the international community.

In their quest to further strengthen South Africa's ongoing transformation from an isolated international pariah to an emerging leader of the developing world, the Mandela and Mbeki administrations adopted foreign policy adaptation strategies. These strategies were designed to adapt South African's foreign policy to the new realities of the post-apartheid era: restructuring the foreign policy establishment; self-promotion as the leader of the 'African Renaissance'; adherence to the foreign policy principle of 'universality' and assuming a leadership role in international organizations.

The United Nations has become one of the most important forums through which the international community's rapprochement towards South Africa has manifested itself and has continued to play an important role in post-Apartheid South Africa's international relations. South Africa's global status has increased significantly through its participation in numerous UN bodies, agencies and General Assembly sessions. It has thus been argued that South Africa's participation at the United Nations is driven by its intention to reform the organisation as well as showcase itself as a representative of the developing world and especially Africa, in an attempt to increase its global stature as a moral and African power. In addition to this it ostensibly seeks to profile itself as a multilateral leader.

This thesis attempts to explore the nature of South Africa's involvement and participation within the United Nations in the Post-Apartheid era and what the major consequences have been. It assesses the content and consequences of South African foreign policy rhetoric and institutional participation at the United Nations since the

end of apartheid. This is done, first, through an attempt to understand the role of international organisations within the international arena and how they are utilised in furthering foreign policy objectives of states through cooperation (which constitutes the theoretical backdrop to the thesis), and second, through a systematic review of South African behaviour and policy objectives at the United Nations. Amongst others, one of the more important themes emerging from this analysis is that South Africa is combining many of its more recent UN initiatives with its participation in other multilateral partnerships.

## OPSOMMING

Suid-Afrika het 'n belangrike rol as een van die stigterslede van beide die Volkebond en die Verenigde Nasies (VN) gespeel, met laasgenoemde wat in 1945 tot stand gekom het. Toe die Suid-Afrikaanse regering egter sy beleid van Apartheid ingebring en daarmee volgehou het, het die land 'n uitgewekene binne die internasionale gemeenskap geword. In 1994, na twintig jaar van internasionale isolasie, het 'n nuwe demokratiese regering tot stand gekom wat onmiddelik deur die res van die wêreld aanvaar is.

In hul pogings om Suid-Afrika verder te versterk en te ontwikkel van 'n uitgewekene tot 'n opkomende leier van die ontwikkelende wêreld, het die Mandela- en Mbeki-administrasies aanpassings aan hulle buitelandse beleidstrategieë gemaak. Hierdie strategieë is geskep om Suid-Afrika se buitelandse beleid te laat aanpas en in ooreenstemming te bring met die nuwe realiteite en eise van die Post-Apartheid-era: die herstrukturering van buitelandse beleid, Suid-Afrika se poging om die land te bevorder en te bemark as die leier van die 'Afrika Renaissance', gehoor te gee aan die beleidsbeginsel van 'universaliteit' en om 'n leiersrol aan te neem in internasionale organisasies.

Die Verenigde Nasies het een van die belangrikste forums geword waardeur internasionale gemeenskappe se toegeneëtheid jeëns Suid-Afrika gemanifesteer is. Die VN het voortgegaan om 'n belangrike rol in die Nuwe Suid-Afrika se internasionale verhoudings te speel. Suid-Afrika se internasionale status het insiggewend gegroei weens die land se betrokkenheid in verskeie VN-organisasies, agentskappe en Algemene Vergaderingsessies. Daar is gevolglik al gesê dat Suid-Afrika se betrokkenheid in die Verenigde Nasies aangevuur word deur sy voorneme om die organisasie te hervorm en terselfdertyd die land te bemark as 'n verteenwoordiger van die ontwikkelende wêreld en in besonder Afrika, in 'n poging om Suid-Afrika se statuut as 'n moreel-etiese Afrikakrag te verhoog en te bevorder. In aansluiting hiermee poog die land toenemend om homself as 'n multilaterale leier uit te beeld.

Hierdie studie poog om die aard van Suid-Afrikaanse betrokkenheid in en deelname binne die Verenigde Nasies in die Post-Apartheid-era, asook die grootste gevolge van Suid-Afrika se buitelandse beleidsoortuiginge en institusionele deelname aan die Verenigde Nasies sedert die beëindiging van Apartheid te beoordeel. Dit word gedoen, eerstens, deur 'n poging om die rol van internasionale organisasies binne die internasionale arena en hoe hulle aangewend word tot die verbetering van buitelandse beleidsdoelwitte deur samewerking (wat die teoretiese grondslag van hierdie studie is) te verstaan en tweedens deur 'n sistematiese oorsig van Suid-Afrikaanse gedrag en beleidsdoelwitte by die Verenigde Nasies. Een van die belangrikste temas wat deur hierdie studie na vore kom, is dat Suid-Afrika baie van sy mees onlangse VN-inisiatiewe met sy betrokkenheid in multilaterale belangegroepes kombineer.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

AU	African Union
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Community
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs of South Africa
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
G8	Group of Eight
G77	Group of 77 (+ China)
ICC	International Criminal Court
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SANDEF	South African National Defence Force
SAPS	Structural Adjustment Programmes
UN(O)	United Nations (Organisation)
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organisation
WHO	World Health Organisation
WTO	World Trade Organisation

## CHAPTER ONE

### BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

*“Just over 10 years ago, apartheid South Africa was an outlaw, an outcast from the community of nations. As we rejoice at the achievement of democracy and freedom, we also celebrate our elevation to global partner and a champion for Africa and other developing nations, and a bridge between North and South”*

- President Nelson Mandela<sup>1</sup>

#### 1.1 BACKGROUND

South Africa has played an essential role as one of the founding members of both the League of Nations and the United Nations (UN), the latter of which came into existence in 1945. However, when the South African government introduced and pursued its policy of Apartheid, the country became a pariah within the international community (Geldenhuys, 1984). This fall from grace witnessed South Africa's withdrawal from the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and later its other specialised agencies. As opposition grew against its racist policies, South Africa became further isolated from international relations on a multilateral scale.

For twenty years (1974-1994) the isolation and international non-participation of the Apartheid regime had the “perverse advantage”, in that the newly elected government would not be “burdened with long established policy positions that might have been difficult to change” (Wheeler, 2004:86). Therefore, after the first democratic elections in 1994, the South African government started tabula rasa, and embraced its ability to reengage in the global arena.

The period between 1994 and 2000 was manifested with South African multilateral activity and leadership responsibilities as the country “acceded to about seventy multilateral treaties, initiatives and joined or rejoined more than forty inter-

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<sup>1</sup> Mandela, N. “Preface” in E. Sidiropoulos (ed.). 2004. “Apartheid Past, Renaissance Future, South Africa's Foreign Policy: 1994-2004”. Johannesburg: South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA).

governmental institutions” (Nel, Taylor and Van der Westhuizen, 2001: 1). South Africa set out to become a good “global citizen” (Wheeler, 2004: 86) and possibly define itself as a leader of the developing world by making contributions to debates on issues of global concern (Wheeler, 2004: 87). Multilateralism therefore became one of the cornerstones of post-Apartheid South Africa’s foreign policy.

The United Nations General Assembly became “one of the most important forums through which [the] international community’s rapprochement towards South Africa manifested” (Cornelissen, 2006: 26) and has continued to play an important role in post-Apartheid South Africa’s international relations. South Africa’s global status has increased significantly through its participation in numerous UN bodies, agencies and General Assembly sessions. Important concerns of Africa and the developing world, especially those relating to socio-economic development and security affairs, are of specific importance to South Africa as the country seeks to establish itself as a middle power – a state “that [is] neither great nor small in terms of international power, capacity and influence, and demonstrates a propensity to promote cohesion and stability in the world system” (Jordaan, 2003: 165). One reason the country seeks this new role is expectations from the international community (Barber, 2004:86). There is a perception that South Africa has the requisite power, capacity, and prestige to fulfil this role and act as a bridge ensuring that North/South relations are non-antagonistic and more equitable (Department of Foreign Affairs, 1996).

South Africa’s foreign policy has, however, been described as ambiguous characterised by contradictions, inconsistencies and incongruities (Nathan, 2005) and as a result impedes effective participation and achievement of goals within the UN forum. The structure of the UN has itself become a hindrance, with respect to the power disparity between the global North and global South. It is often asked how effective the UN is at providing a voice for countries such as South Africa and whether the organisation’s existence is relevant in today’s world. The subject of United Nations reform has attracted increased attention, especially among the developing countries that tend to be more concerned with substantive reform like the restructuring of the Security Council. South Africa like many others has made no secret of its aspirations to acquire a permanent seat on the Security Council.

There is a significant shortage of academic work focussing specifically on South Africa's participation in the United Nations in the post-Apartheid era. Deon Geldenhuys (1984) has written extensively on the foreign policy behaviour of the apartheid government during isolation, and towards the late 1980s and early 1990s foreign policy think-tanks, such as the Institute of International Affairs were commissioned by the South African government to act in the capacity of fact-producing bodies, rather than influencing policy-making (Pfister, 2006: 23). In 1994 The Foundation for Global Dialogue (FGD), later, The Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD), at the request of Nelson Mandela, was funded by the German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, to assist in analysing the foreign policy challenges which the nascent Democratic South Africa would have to confront (Pfister, 2006: 23-24).

Existing literature has thus expanded in giving an overview of South Africa's first democratic elections and post-Apartheid foreign policy, but only focuses on certain aspects of its multilateralism (Taylor, 2001; Solomon, 1997; Van der Westhuizen, 1998; Alden, 2003; Alden and Le Pere, 2003). Academics, Nel, Taylor and Van der Westhuizen (2000; 2001), have written extensively on South Africa's multilateral reformist embrace within international fora and South Africa's attempt to "punch above its weight" in pursuing its foreign policy goals within these institutions. Taylor (2001) has, through his neo-Gramscian theoretical approach to the global political economy, focused on the South Africa's emergence as a global middle power or "bridge-builder", as well as the conduct of a contradictory and ambiguous post-Apartheid foreign policy within multilateral groupings and organisations. Hence, it has been argued that South Africa's participation at the United Nations is driven by its intention to showcase itself as a representative of the developing world and especially Africa, in an attempt to increase its global stature as a moral and African power. In addition to this it ostensibly seeks to profile itself as a multilateral leader.

This thesis assesses the content and consequences of South African foreign policy rhetoric and institutional participation at the United Nations since the end of apartheid. This is done, first, through an attempt to understand the role of international organisations within the international arena and how they are utilised in furthering foreign policy objectives of states through cooperation (which constitutes the theoretical backdrop to the study), and second, through a systematic review of South

African behaviour and policy objectives at the United Nations. An important emergent theme from this analysis is that South Africa is combining many of its more recent UN initiatives with its participation in other multilateral partnerships.

## **1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

A number of primary and secondary research questions inform this study:

The primary research question is as follows:

*What has been the nature of South Africa's involvement and participation within the United Nations in the Post-Apartheid era and what have been the major consequences thereof as implication of its foreign policy objectives?*

Secondary research questions have been formulated in the following way:

- i) What has been South Africa's orientation towards multilateralism after 1994 and how was this realised?
- ii) What has been the main form of South Africa's institutional participation within the United Nations' various organs, systems, and initiatives?
- iii) Have there been major processes or initiatives involving South Africa at the United Nations and what have the consequences been in South Africa's attempt to become a middle power as resonated in its foreign policy?

## **1.3 THEORETICAL CONCEPTS: MULTILATERALISM AND MIDDLE POWERS**

### **1.3.1 MULTILATERALISM**

Multilateralism can be defined as an “institutional form that coordinates relations among three or more states on the basis of generalised principles of conduct” (Ruggie, 1993:11). As Ruggie (1993: 567) notes, “...what is distinctive about multilateralism is not merely that it coordinates national policies in groups of three or more states, which is something that other organisational forms also do, but that it does so on the basis of certain principles of ordering relations amongst those states” (Ruggie, 1993: 567).

As multilateral relations focus on global issues, this study will analyse multilateralism as a “deep organising principle of international life” (Caporaso, 1993:55) and look at South Africa's participation in and interaction primarily through multilateral institutions (in this case the United Nations), which forms the substance of its multilateral diplomacy. As global issues have domestic relevance, the role that South Africa seeks to play in the development of international thinking in these areas and how it is related not only to its international objectives but also to domestic policies is explored as well.

As Black (2001:77) notes, “multilateralism [also] offers states like South Africa a means of enhancing their leverage and multiplying their influence while minimizing their exposure and risk on sensitive foreign policy issues”. By analyzing post-apartheid South Africa’s multilateral activity, one will be able to define the country’s efforts at establishing itself as an “emerging” middle power.

### **1.3.2 MIDDLE POWERS**

Taken from the work of Robert Cox (1996), Schoeman (2003: 350) uses the term middle power to denote, first, a position in a universal hierarchical order of states; second, size and rank in the international division of labour, which confers the opportunity to exert moral influence on the global system; and third, an interest in a stable international order that does not seek to impose “an ideologically preconceived vision of an ideal world order”. Most importantly, middle powers usually operate through multilateral avenues, since they cannot impose their vision on a global scale (Cox cited in Schoeman 2003).

It is important to distinguish between “traditional” and “emerging” middle powers. The distinction is sometimes blurred both in theory and in practice. The main distinction is that traditional middle powers including Canada, New Zealand, the Netherlands, and the Scandinavian states are usually from the Global North. Emerging middle powers such as South Africa, Brazil, and India are mostly from the Global South (Jordaan, 2003: 165).

In his analysis Jordaan (2003: 168) distinguishes between traditional and emerging powers based on constitutive and behavioural differences. The constitutive criteria look at the country’s democratic tradition, time of emergence as a middle power,

position in the world economy, domestic distribution of wealth, regional influence, and origin of perceived neutrality. The behavioural criteria are based on the country's regional orientation, attitude to regional integration and cooperation, nature of actions to effect global change and its purpose of international identity construction.

In the international political economy, traditional middle powers are the wealthy core states, with stable economies and democracies. They emerged during the Cold War, and did not really fit into either the Eastern or Western bloc. They do not exhibit any real regional power considering the surrounding regional powers, and are usually “appeasing and legitimizing” (Schoeman, 2003: 351). In contrast, emerging middle powers are generally young democracies that emerged as a result of the Cold War. These countries do not necessarily display exceptional democratic features, and form part of the semi-periphery (Schoeman, 2003: 351). Their economies are usually the strongest in their region and are therefore able to take the lead in regional structures and organisations. Because of their regional influence, many countries rely on them to maintain and promote stability (Jordaan, 2003: 173). The middle power concept is a useful analytical tool which will be used to gauge South Africa's foreign policy (international/multilateral) behaviour and attempts to “punch above its weight” on certain issues (i.e. the manner in which it engages in international affairs beyond what its economic size and position in the international system would determine) (Van der Westhuizen, 1998: 439).

#### **1.4 METHODOLOGY**

This thesis is a qualitative and exploratory assessment of South Africa's foreign policy behaviour and intents at the United Nations. Qualitative researchers rely on interpretive social science. They use a transcendent perspective, apply “logic in practice” and follow a non-linear research path (Neuman, 2000: 139). They usually try to present authentic interpretations that are sensitive to specific social historical contexts. Exploratory studies are most typically done for three purposes: to satisfy the researcher's curiosity and desire for a better understanding; to test the feasibility of undertaking a more careful study; and to develop the methods to be employed in a more careful study (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 84).



With the intention of observing how South Africa has manifested its foreign policy objectives within its multilateral activity and behaviour, this thesis made use of secondary and primary material. Secondary material consisted of scholarly writing on the subject of post-apartheid South Africa's foreign policy. Primary material consisted of government policies, speeches from key foreign policy role-players within the South African government, and from officials at South Africa's Permanent Mission to the United Nations. Policies and speeches were analysed to determine the trends in South Africa's foreign policy orientation over the past decade. Further, a simplified use of historical/comparative data analysis was undertaken with regards to South Africa's development within the United Nations through an examination of the organisation's official documents such as charters and policy statements. A final aspect of analyses entailed an investigation of the change in foreign policy between former President Nelson Mandela and that of President Thabo Mbeki, and how that may have affected the country's UN behaviour. This form of trend study - noting change in the pursuit of foreign policy objectives at different times within the UN – enables conclusions to be drawn about the intentions and positions of major individual political figures, and the ramifications these bore.

For reasons of practicality and due to time constraints, the time frame of analysis is from 1994 to March 2007. This time frame does preclude in-depth review of important developments in South Africa's role at the United Nations since then, in particular relating to South Africa's membership of the Security Council and some of the controversy which surrounded decisions taken by the South African diplomatic personnel in their capacity as representatives on the Council. The thesis does deal however with the early stages of South Africa's membership on the Security Council and some of the trends which were emerging at that point.

## **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE**

By providing an analysis of post-apartheid South Africa's participation at the United Nations, this thesis highlights existing shortcomings and identifies new shortcomings within South Africa's foreign policy as well as the United Nations as a multilateral organisation. An attempt is made to assess how South Africa has projected itself as a middle power and representative of the developing world, and how these efforts played out at the United Nations. This thesis adds to an important gap in the literature

on post-apartheid South African foreign policy, in which although much attention has been given to the implications of the country's multilateral orientation, whilst the issue of South Africa at the United Nations has been neglected.

## **1.6 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS**

The limitations of this thesis include the lack of grounded academic work focusing mainly on South Africa and its participation at the United Nations. Research is also wholly based on qualitative and unobtrusive research and is entirely descriptive due to the unavailability of primary data and time constraints.

Unobtrusive research is methods of studying social behavior without affecting it and can be qualitative and quantitative. Historical comparative analysis was one of the preferred methods of unobtrusive research, as it is a method for discovering what happened during some period in the past from records and accounts.

Historical comparative analysis helps one to understand the historical nature of phenomena, events, people, agencies, and even institutions. In many ways, it may be as important as understanding the items themselves. There is no end of data available for analysis in historical research. Four types of historical data sources are used: oral records, artifacts and quantitative records. Primary sources are documents written by a witness to the events, whereas secondary sources are secondhand versions and therefore less accurate. Secondary sources are used as back-up data and when primary data is not available (Babbie, 2001:338-345).

Due to time constraints and availability of South African officials at the Department of Foreign Affairs, formal interviews could not be conducted. However, speeches from South Africa's Presidents (both former and incumbent), the Minister of Foreign Affairs and personnel of the Foreign Affairs ministry, as well as the representative to the United Nations, have been used to supplement the lack of primary sources of information.

Further limitations in collecting primary research data in the form of recording and analysing voting trends of South Africa within the major bodies of the UN, is due to the enormity of the UN voting database, this system requires a sound legalistic and

technical approach to gain access to the exact information required. The UN voting results per individual country is therefore not easily accessible due to this, and was found to be quite time consuming for a single researcher. Major resolutions passed in the UNGA or UNSC, are at times made available in the form of a “news brief” but do not explicitly state how each member voted. This is not sufficient in providing a convincing pattern of voting on a particular issue. The Government Communication and Information Services of South Africa (GCIS), is the primary source in compiling this information as reference for South Africa, does not always make the information open to public scrutiny and is usually restricted as confidential.

This thesis has also been delimited to certain themes which have constantly featured in South Africa’s foreign policy and have resonated at the United Nations. These themes include South Africa’s continued drive to promote the African/Global agenda through the New Economic Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD); security and peacekeeping in Africa; the reform of the United Nations; and the issue of a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council. This thesis does not attempt to provide in-depth analysis of these issues, but rather highlights the main arguments of each as they are complex issues in their own right. So, for example, this thesis only mentions South Africa’s quiet diplomacy towards Zimbabwe at certain junctures in this study, in an attempt to display shortcomings in South Africa’s relationship and solidarity towards other African countries. The matter, however, is in every respect a larger issue that has challenged both South Africa’s foreign policy establishment as well as strained its relationships with its partners in the North at the United Nations.

## 1.7 THESIS OUTLINE

The chapters in this thesis are structured around the research questions provided in Section 1.2. In order to understand post-Apartheid South Africa's participation in the United Nations, Chapter 2 will provide a literature review to strengthen and deepen the theoretical concepts used in this thesis which are divided into two components. The first component provides a general (theoretical) overview of multilateralism as well as middlepowership (in particular the distinction between traditional and emerging middle powers). Chapter 3 looks specifically at South Africa's foreign policy, offering an overview of trends in South Africa's foreign policy. Chapter 4 creates the context, outlining the various ways in which South Africa has been involved in the United Nations. A historical overview is sketched, briefly looking at the complexities that characterised the relationship between South Africa and the United Nations during the apartheid era compared to the increased activism since 1994. The chapter continues to identify and explore some of the *central* themes that have characterised South Africa's connection to the world body. These include South Africa's global development agenda and its so-termed African agenda through NEPAD; the issue of UN reform; and the question of South Africa's seat at the United Nations Security Council. To conclude, Chapter 5 provides a summary of the main arguments and presents a number of concluding remarks. Certain aspects worthy of future research are outlined.

## CHAPTER TWO

### A WORLD OF INTERDEPENDENCE

*“... [countries], may not go as far as to surrender sovereign powers to international organisations, they do find them indispensable...New nations demonstrate this in their eagerness to be admitted to the UN...the big powers in the UN do not seem anxious to withdraw, and all countries find the organisation useful for sounding out ideas and for contact with other nations.”*

– A. Leroy Bennett<sup>2</sup>

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

An interdependent system can be defined as a “tightly bound collection of units or actors whose behaviour affects one another directly or indirectly” (McGowan and Nel, 1999: 3); through the “regular, mutually accepted and mutually created patterns of relations” of international institutions that creates a mutual dependence between these actors (Murphy, 1999: 104). Usually these relations involve the coordination of policies concerning specific issues (commercial, security, social or environmental in nature) that affect all parties and can be undertaken by two states (bilaterally), or involve three or more states (multilaterally) (McGowan and Nel, 1999: 12).

The term “international institution” can refer to conventions or treaties which set out rules of behaviour and cooperation between states regarding certain issues. For example, the *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* was the chief vehicle for efforts to prevent the dangerous spread of nuclear weapons. The term can also refer to formal international organisations which embody these institutions and serve to monitor and enforce rules through a secretary general and permanent staff. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is a perfect illustration of a successful multilateral alliance that has also become the most highly institutionalised, (Keohane, 1998: 82-83). Both of the above examples are multilateral in nature

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<sup>2</sup> Bennett, A.L. (1995). *International Organizations: Principles and Issues*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.

(organisational form), meaning that it engages more than three states on the basis of cooperation and reciprocity in achieving the same goals. International institutions are essentially created by the state to solve problems that they cannot solve on their own (Mitchell and Keilbach, 2001: 891).

Academic scholarship analyzing the roles which international institutions play in the international system has a tendency to evolve as the dynamic of the system changes. In recent years insight has been gained into “what makes some institutions more capable than others - how such institutions best promote cooperation among states and what mechanics of bargaining they use [...], and as the world moves toward new forms of global regulation and governance, the increasing impact of international institutions has raised new questions about how these institutions themselves are governed” (Keohane, 1998: 82).

This chapter therefore intends to give a theoretical overview on the emergence of international institutions and intergovernmental organisations (IGO) as formal institution and aims to understand the role they play in the international system and also to understand why states would become members of such bodies. It also reviews the place of multilateralism in international relations, - *inter alia*, it provides a stage for states to exercise foreign policy and national interests in the international arena.

This chapter looks at countries that are more inclined to pursue a multilateralist foreign policy within organisations, i.e. middle powers. The middle power concept is quite contentious as there are many factors that scholars have used to characterise countries based on material and power capabilities (enumerative) and foreign policy behaviour (constitutive). And as the international landscape is changing a further distinction is drawn between traditional middle powers and emerging powers.

## **2.2 A GLOBAL SHIFT**

The terms, international institutions, regimes and organisations are used interchangeably in academic written work, even though a distinction can be drawn between them. *Institutions* refer to sets of rules that regulate state behaviour and these rules may be formal and explicit, or informal and implicit (Keohane cited in Simmons and Martin, 2002: 194). Stephen Krasner (1983: 1) defines *international regimes* as sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures

around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations. "Regimes often include formal organisations, but are not limited to them. Regimes are institutions in a broader sense: recognised patterns of practice that define the rules of the game" (Keohane and Nye, 1985: 151). *International organisations* are the formal embodiment of institutions, as they encompass a number of issue-specific regimes such as those for peacekeeping, development and the environment. Organisations also differ from regimes in that they are physical establishments (they have headquarters), employ civil servants and bureaucrats and have budgets and voting procedures (Simmons and Martin, 2002: 192-193), whereas regimes are usually ad-hoc forums or groupings (e.g. the G8). The phenomena of international institutions and regimes are not new; it just did not receive the attention it demands today.

## **2.3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS**

### **2.3.1 (NEO-)REALISM**

The two main assumptions of realist thought is that the international system is in anarchy as there is no overarching authority (world government) to prevent aggression, and the nation state is the main rational actor, promoting their national interests within the system (Walt, 1998: 31). "States prefer relative gains (i.e., doing better than other states) to absolute gains. They seek to protect their power and status and will resist even mutually beneficial cooperation if their partners are likely to benefit more than they are." (Keohane, 1998: 88).

While cooperation among self-interested actors is possible, formal institutions have been neglected. Neo-realists emphasise "cooperation under anarchy", which focuses on decentralised cooperation without the presence of institutions (Oye, 1986: 5-6). According to realists, international institutions and organisations are "empty vessels" constructed only to "advance or impede state goals in the international economy, the environment and national security", and foster cooperation in non-controversial areas where states have common interests (Koremenos, Lipson and Snidal: 2001: 762). They therefore rarely constrain state behaviour in issue areas where interests are diverse and opposed. International organisations play little or no role in maintaining international peace and security, as "ciphers for state power" and lack independent

authority (Mearsheimer, 1995; Koremenos, Lipson and Snidal: 2001: 762). As stated by Gilpin (1981:19):

An international system is established for the same reasons that any political system is created; actors enter social relations and create social structures in order to advance particular sets of political, economic or other interests. Because the interests of some of the actors may conflict with those of other actors, the particular interests that are most favoured by the social arrangements tend to reflect the relative powers of the actors.

### **2.3.2 (NEO-)LIBERAL INSTITUTIONALISM**

(Neo-)liberal institutionalists synthesise three elements: “a realistic respect for state power; an appreciation of the incentives that international independence creates for cooperation; and an understanding of how established institutions themselves affect states’ perceptions of their self-interest, by affecting the costs and benefits of alternative courses of action” (Keohane and Murphy, 1992: 882).

Proponents of institutionalism continue to view states as the key actors in the international system, but acknowledge that they are not the only important actors and that states pursue their interests through institutions and/or regimes. They also tend to agree to disagree with neo-realism by accepting two of its fundamental principles which is the anarchic structure of the international system. (Neo-) liberal institutionalists however disagree on the degree of anarchic constraint and the rational egoism of states (utility maximising competitors) (Keohane, 1998: 83). Since states compete for resources and advantages in the international system, liberal institutionalists suggest that states are better off maximising their interests through cooperation, in that it does not matter how much the other party gets as long as they get something - “absolute gains, rather than relative gains” (Keohane, 1998:83-85). In addition, Keohane (1984: 72) argues that in rational-choice analysis, each actor is assumed to have calculated that it will be better off as a member of an international regime than outside of it. Moreover, rational-choice theory assumes that institutions can be accounted for by examining the incentives facing the actors who create and maintain them.



Institutions, regimes and organisations therefore exist as enduring sets of norms, rules and expected patterns of behaviour and are neither epiphenomenal nor merely tools of the powerful (Strange, cited in Krasner, 1983:4-5). Institutions facilitate activities or “transaction costs” which in turn facilitate reciprocity that are beneficial to states and ease the risks of tricky negotiations (Keohane, 1998). In other words, institutions are formed as ways to overcome cases of ‘free-rider’ states (those that share benefits of cooperation without contributing to its costs) which undermine the legitimacy of cooperation for those who do meet the costs and ‘prisoner’s dilemma’ of relying on promises of cooperation in situations where enforcement is impossible.

### **2.3.3 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM**

A constructivist looks beyond the state and its power, and focuses more on the importance of ideas, identity and discourse. Through constructivist lenses states develop various identities to suit the international environment; one would be able to focus on how the state would identify itself in the new globalised era and “pay close attention to the prevailing discourse(s) in society because discourse reflects and shapes beliefs and interests, and establishes accepted norms of behaviour” (Walt, 1998: 41).

Some of the basic premises of constructivism focuses on the co-dependence between social structures (that is, IOs) and agents (the state), and the rules which link the two. International norms are also formulated multilaterally within intergovernmental organisations which are also general principles of conduct for members to conform to. These norms are “formal [and] explicit, and legally binding rules” which are “embodied in such instruments as peace accords, treaties for settling disputes, and arms limitation agreements” as well in the founding documents of organisations such as the UN, NATO and the AU” (Geldenhuis, 2006: 94). Directly and indirectly, rules cause or produce certain behaviour, either by constraining actor choices and either by constraining actor choices or indirectly by defining roles and identity and providing reasons for acting in one way rather than the other (other (Ruggie, 1998: 13-16; Simmons and Martin, 2002: 198).

For constructivists, international organisations and institutions do not exist only to improve the welfare of states. Constructivists expect and explain a much broader

range of impacts international organisations can have and specifically highlight their role in constructing actors, interests, and social purposes. According to constructivists, organisations are autonomous and have power and culture that govern behaviour and shape interests (Barnett and Finnemore, 1999: 700).

Taking these perspectives into account, a more practical analysis of international institutions, it would be agreed that organisations and major institutions are structured according to the needs and advancement of its creator's (the state) goals in the international economy, environment and national security (Koremenos, Lipson and Snidal, 2001: 762). Therefore institutions can either be global and have universal membership (UN) or regional and restrict membership to certain states and actors (e.g. SADC). Some institutions may have no formal organisational structure, usually when considering bilateral treaties or regimes, however, states usually codify their relationships in formal legal arrangements. Voting procedures may also differ between, equal votes, weighted voting or supermajority voting and lastly, authority may be centralised and have significant operating responsibilities or provide platforms for open discussions (Koremenos, Lipson and Snidal, 2001: 762).

Most organisations function as disseminators of (government) information and research especially regarding transnational issues such as diseases, pollution, terrorism and so forth, in an attempt to encourage cooperation between governments as these issues are not easily dealt with unilaterally, therefore where “information reveals substantial shared interests, agreements may result” (Keohane and Nye, 1985: 153). Organisation therefore function to lower the transactions costs by providing transparency and a framework of rules (Caporaso, 1993:63)

The rise of globalisation<sup>3</sup>, in addition to the end of the Cold War, has increased the role of international institutions. Economic globalisation, for one, leads to a power shift from state to market, which is an important factor contributing to the emergence of global governance. Along with the globalisation of economies, other changes have become apparent. These include the surge of global social movements, the shrinking of political distances through the global operations of transnational corporations, in

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<sup>3</sup> Globalization is a summary term for the increasingly complex interactions between individuals, enterprises, institutions and markets across national borders

the vast increase in transboundary communication and information exchanges, most notably via the Internet; the transboundary transmission of disease and ecological impact; and the increased internationalisation of certain types of criminal activity; and the mushrooming of global interdependencies fostered by currency crises - all of which touch upon the subject of global governance (Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organisation, 1999).

These centralising and decentralising dynamics have undermined the constitutions and treaties of national governments. Nevertheless, governments “still operate as sovereign powers in a number of ways, but some of their authority have been relocated toward sub-national collectivities” (Rosenau, 2000: 174). Globalisation has also brought benefits and risks that are distributed unequally. Furthermore, the growth and prosperity it provides for many is offset by the increasing vulnerability and marginalisation of others, and by the growth of "uncivil society" (Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organisation, 1999).

With this rise of globalisation and global activity, states can no longer act in isolation and are dependent on each other. As the “new world order” was being ushered in, a multilateralist (interdependent) environment re-emerged, and cooperation among nations was the only reasonable solution to maintain peace and security in the new world system (Evans and Grant, 1995: 9). Multilateral diplomacy has thus manifested itself within the foreign policies of many countries to facilitate cooperation between nations and may help one understand why states have certain foreign policy behaviour (Grant and Evans, 1995:10, Nel, Taylor and Van der Westhuizen, 2001:9). These institutions determine what principles are acceptable as the basis for reducing conflicts and whether governmental actions are legitimate or illegitimate. The main aim is to encourage and facilitate cooperation amongst nations, but also not to encroach on the state’s interests (Keohane, 1998).

## **2.4 MULTILATERALISM: THEORETICALLY DEFINED**

Caporaso (1993:51-53), purports that “multilateralism” has been neglected in theories of international relations, not as a subject matter based on multilateral activities or organisation but as an explanatory concept. At this point one should distinguish between multilateral diplomacy, multilateral institutions and the institution of

multilateralism. According to Nel, Taylor and Van der Westhuizen (2001: 9), the study of *multilateral diplomacy* of an actor should not only consider the involvement of the official state actors in the practices and institutions that facilitate cooperation between three or more state. The sum-total of a state's involvement orientates itself towards and conducts itself with respect to the broader phenomenon of multilateralism as an institution. Caporaso (1993:54) draws the distinction between *multilateral institutions*, "characterized by permanent locations and postal addresses, distinct headquarters, and ongoing staffs and secretariats" (e.g. organisations), and the *institution of multilateralism* as manifesting itself within these physical organisations as the "less formal, less codified habits, practices, ideas and norms of international society."

As an activity within foreign policy, Robert Keohane (1990: 731) defined multilateralism as a "practice of coordinating national policies in groups of three or more states, through ad hoc arrangements or by means of institutions" (Keohane, 1990:731). Ruggie, however contends that Keohane's definition is too nominal and formal, merely focussing on the number of participants, "coordinating the behaviour of states [or joint action by three or more nations] interacting with one another" (Ruggie, 1993: 12, Nel, Taylor and Van der Westhuizen, 2000: 44, Holloway, 2000: 362).

A more substantive and qualitative definition of multilateralism is therefore proposed by Ruggie (1993: 11), as an "institutional form [including regimes and formal multilateral organisations] that coordinates relations among three or more states on the basis of generalised principles of conduct". This definition focuses on the type of relations that are established between the actors in the institution. It is thereby a more normative perspective as actors have to abide by certain sets of rules or norms (Taylor, 2000: 22-23).

Caporaso (1993: 55) reaffirms Ruggie's conception of multilateralism as a recurrent pattern of cooperative behaviour whereby international actors organise their interactions according to their norms, or in other words an architectural form, or as a "deep organising principle of international life" based on three sets of norms; indivisibility, generalised principles of conduct and diffuse reciprocity.

As Caporaso (1993: 53-54) explains,

[...] Indivisibility can be thought of as the scope (both geographic and functional) over which costs and benefits are spread [...] Generalized principles of conduct usually come in the form of norms exhorting general if not universal modes of relating to other states, rather than differentiating relations case-by-case on the basis of individual preferences, situational exigencies, or a prior particularistic grounds. Diffuse reciprocity adjusts the utilitarian lenses for the long view, emphasizing that actors expect to benefit in the long run and over many issues, rather than every time on every issue.

Phillip Nel (1998: 3), states that in an interdependent world stable orders are best promoted by applying “generalized principles of conduct...in a non-discriminatory way to all states that want to cooperate, without negating the individuality and autonomy of each actor; distributing the costs and benefits of interaction across the system (indivisibility); and developing incentives for actors to suspend the urge for instant gratification on every single issue and to recognise and pursue joint satisfaction on many issues (diffuse reciprocity)” (cited in Taylor and Williams, 2006:2).

#### **2.4.1 MULTILATERAL ORGANISATIONS AS LEGITIMISING AND/OR DELGITIMISING AGENTS**

Ruggie (1993: 24) links multilateralism to hegemonic stability theory and underlines the importance of judging the nature of the leadership provided by the hegemon. (Puchal, 2005: 572) defines hegemony as, “...a state of international affairs, a condition or situation in international relations. It arises when a single state attains preponderant power and elects to use its power to manage the international system....The hegemon enforces established rules by meting out rewards and punishments. It induces compliant behaviour by promising cooperation, co-opting partners, and providing collective goods up to the limits of its self-interest.” Therefore, a hegemon's behaviour helps to establish the norm of multilateralism. If this is true, then certainly its inverse must follow: consistent unilateral behaviour by the hegemon would seem to delegitimise the multilateralist order (Holloway, 2000: 363-364)

A similar link has been made by Robert Cox (1993), regarding multilateralism by making use of the Gramscian notion of hegemony. He argues that the essential

function of international institution is to justify, defend, and maintain the “hegemonic ideology” and its political-economic project (Cox, 1993: 62). Within this framework, the hegemon creates international institutions and develops “universal norms [...] and mechanisms which lay down the rules of behaviour for states” (Taylor, 2000: 53) only to legitimise itself and the order. However, this normative regime may also delegitimise the hegemon and its position at certain “temporal” moments (Taylor, 2000: 52).

Since decolonisation and becoming members of equal stature (based on the notion of non-discrimination) in international organisations, states from the developing South have used techniques such as forming “blocs” to delimit the hegemonic order (Kahler, 1992: 298). A well documented event of this leverage of power was in 1964 at the United Nations General Assembly, where the developing South temporarily “captured” the United Nations, and were able to build pressure leading to the founding of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (Taylor, 2000: 54). Multilateral organisations are not simply agents of the hegemon or mere legitimisers of the accepted ‘standard of behaviour’ but can, at specific junctures in history, act to at least attempt to challenge the hegemonic discourse (Taylor, 2000: 54).

Prior to the development of hegemonic stability theory, a long-established attitude guided most realist/idealist debates about the development of multilateral institutions. Most realists accepted the idea that under conditions of anarchy a hierarchy of nations would emerge, ranking states by their power levels from great to minor powers. Greater power enabled greater capacity to act and to influence outcomes to the great power's liking. The desire to maximise the freedom to use their greater power made the top powers poor multilateralists (Nel, Taylor and Van der Westhuizen, 2000: 44-45).

However, the interest of the small powers was to lessen their power disadvantage by binding the great powers to legal, alliance, and other multilateral institutions. Great powers relied on their own power advantage; minor powers relied on law and international organisation. Put simply, great powers tended to be unilateralist, small and medium powers multilateralist (Taylor, 2000). It is important to emphasise that

the United Nations is an organisation of just that -“nations” - and its eventual failure would only be due to the member nations not adhering to the principles of the organisation.

## **2.5 MIDDLE POWERS**

Defining a middle power presents an “ambiguous, conceptual category in international politics” (Cooper, 1997). The concept of middle power was usually used within the Cold War context, based on security and power based on enumerative, aggregate, physical and material capabilities which helped differentiate between super powers and small powers. Realist scholars such as Holbraad (1984: 89-90) thus categorised middle powers according to their Gross Domestic Product (GDP), military capacity, geographic and population size and strategic location (Van der Westhuizen, 1998: 437).

However, in the post-Cold War era, using the ranking system based on economic, military and strategic factors alone are no longer as consistent and clear as in the late 1980s and early 1990s after the Cold War, as one would end up with an “eclectic mix” of countries ranging from the developed North to the developing south, where a huge variance in actual foreign policy behaviour and interests can be identified (Hamill and Lee, 2001:34). The focus on security of the state has shifted to the security of the citizen with regards to economic and social insecurity. The global shift has seen the hegemony of the US decline and more emphasis on diplomatic activism by middle powers. A further distinction was therefore created within the middle power concept, which distinguishes between traditional and emerging middle powers, especially in the post-Cold War era, and will be discussed later in the chapter.

A middle power can therefore, vaguely be defined as “manifestly not a great or even major power, nor however [...] small or significant” (Evans and Grant, 1995:344), “occupying an intermediary position in the overall power structure of the international system” (Taylor, 2000) or “generally accepted as possessing a range of capabilities within the middle range of states” (Cox, 1996:244). Robert Cox (cited in Van der Westhuizen, 1998: 438) puts forth, that the middle power concept is not a fixed universal but something that has to be rethought continually in the context of the changing state of the international system. Scholars have thus used a combination of

criteria based on capabilities and behavioural activities and even power capabilities of a state to provide a greater understanding and definition of its role in the international system.

Hamill and Lee (2001), have therefore suggested that a country identified as a middle power, can be evaluated not only based on the traditional aggregate approach but also by focusing on behavioural attributes. Even though capabilities are taken into account, the behavioural approach asserts that “to be included in the category of middlepowership, countries have to act as middle powers” with regards to their foreign policy interests and foreign policy behaviour (Hamill and Lee, 2001: 34-35). Regardless of a country’s physical and material capabilities, it is the behaviour approach consisting of “non-structural factors” such as diplomatic skill, which enable middle powers to become important and often decisive players in international relations (Hamill and Lee, 2001: 35).

From a liberalist point of view, Cooper, Higgot and Nossal (1993), have categorised middle power behaviour by the roles they play as *catalysts, facilitators and managers*. Whereas Nossal and Stubbs (1997) have focused on the *scope, style, focus and forms and forums* of middle power behaviour. This study will try to identify the overlapping criteria as discerned by the above academic analysis.

As a *catalyst*, middle powers use their diplomatic skills such as intellectual leadership to trigger foreign policy initiatives. The *scope* and *style* of this behaviour thus includes being an activist and getting involved in a wide range of diplomatic matters, well beyond their concern. Although they do get involved in every situation of conflict, they justify their activities of generating plans of actions as looking out in the interest of the international community (Cooper, Higgot and Nossal, 1993; Nossal and Stubbs, 1997).

Middle powers always seem to be *facilitating* coalition-building initiatives on international and regional issues. The style of this behaviour includes the facilitation of collaborative action by “gathering support and ideas from as many likeminded states” to find solutions. These coalitions can be used as a means of leverage;



therefore leadership is considered a key technique (Cooper, Higgot and Nossal, 1993; Nossal and Stubb, 1997).

The managerial inclination of middle powers can be illustrated in the building of institutions and regimes. It is the focus of middle powers to reduce conflict and develop confidence building (Cooper, Higgot and Nossal, 1993; Nossal and Stubbs, 1997). Middle power countries prefer exerting influence on the multilateral level, carving out a “diplomatic niche.” International organisations are usually the structures of choice as middle powers have a better chance of building up consensus around certain issues in the presence of big or more powerful countries (Schoeman, 2003: 351). These actions strengthen rule-based systems and therefore limit any unilateral actions by these bigger countries, and in turn allow the smaller states to “participate on an equal footing on the world stage” (Nzo, 1999 cited in Schoeman, 2003: 354).

## **2.6 TRADITIONAL VERSUS EMERGING MIDDLE POWERS**

This study makes reference to the definition given by Jordaan (2003:165) describing middle powers as “states that are neither great nor small in terms of their international power, capacity and influence, and demonstrate a propensity to promote cohesion and stability in the world system” as well as his analysis which distinguishes between traditional and emerging middle powers. A combination of characteristics is considered in distinguishing between middle powers. These include: considerations of state capacity, position in the world order, the normative composition of the middle power, state-societal complex, domestic class interests, and the role and influence of foreign policy-makers (Jordaan, 2003:166). Taking the above analysis into account, most middle powers would display these behavioural attributes, however, there are differences in approach by countries further dividing middle powers into traditional and emerging powers.

In earlier scholarship, only countries from the North were considered as middle powers, governments which were established and were economically and politically strong were usually associated with the foreign policy activities of the Scandinavian countries, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. They fit the criteria mentioned in the above analysis in both material capabilities as well as foreign policy behaviour. According to Jordaan’s (2003: 172) study, most countries credited as traditional

middle powers were “old states” and within the international division of labour formed part of the core. They emerged during the Cold War; with regards to the roles they play in the international system. They played an activist role and secured their position by maintaining the balance of power and global security. These powers therefore have an inclination to use multilateral bodies to pursue their aim of maintaining stability; not directly having their own self interest at heart but indirectly decisions made on a multilateral scale affects them as well. A middle power can not impose “an ideologically preconceived vision of an ideal world order, in the presence of big or superpowers” (Cox, 1996: 245). As Keohane (1969: 296) stated – “a middle power is a state whose leaders consider that it cannot act alone effectively, but may be able to have a systemic impact in a small group or through an international institution. As established, stable democracies, they have an almost equal distribution of wealth, and enjoy the highest quality of life

The emerging middle power concept is usually applied to countries of the south or from the (semi) periphery. South Africa, India and Brazil are considered to be “emerging.” Therefore, they have not reached the status yet, as these countries are part of the developing world (explaining the use of “emerging”, to go with “developing”), and they would seem to have a role somewhat different from established, developed middle powers (Schoeman, 2003: 349). Emerging middle powers have some leverage over the traditional powers, in that they are usually more dominant in their respective regions, economically and more influential within their regional organisation, and are often “keen participants and often initiators of regional cooperation and integration” (Jordaan, 2003: 173). These regional powers however, do not necessarily gain the support and legitimacy to advance their greater foreign policy objectives from their regional partner countries. In the case of South Africa, for example, its ‘secondary powers,’ Zimbabwe and Nigeria have not really accepted its initiatives on the continent. Similarly, due to nuclear capabilities and other reasons Pakistan opposes India’s leadership and Argentina, Mexico and Venezuela undermines Brazil’s regional power status Argentina.

Some middle powers hardly show any interest in aspiring to superpower status as they can make an impact in their current position. They are hegemonic legitimisers and aim to maintain orderliness and security in the world system. Middle powers are

proud of being recognised as “good global citizens”, as they perceive to have an obligation to be policy entrepreneurs in pursuit of ethical outcomes in the international arena (Ravenhill, 1998; Jordaan, 2003: 173-178).

In his instructive analysis Hurrell (2000: 4) explains why middle powers use international institutions to assert their interests:

Indeed sovereignty may be increasingly defined not by power to insulate one's state from external influences but by the power to participate effectively in international institutions of all kinds. [...] There is no great puzzle as to the advantages that often lead intermediate states to favor multilateralism and institutions [...]: the degree to which institutions provide political space for important middle level players to build new coalitions in order to try and effect emerging norms in ways that are congruent with their interests and to counterbalance or deflect the preferences of the most powerful; and the extent to which institutions provide ‘voice opportunities’ to make known their interests and to bid for political support in the broader market place of ideas. So intermediate states will seek to use international institutions either to defend themselves against norms or rules or practices that adversely affect their interest or [...] to change dominant international norms in ways that they would like to see.

## 2.7 SUMMARY

“In world politics, the lack of a world government means that states must find ways to cooperate with one another through the use of reciprocity rather than hierarchy” (Keohane and Ostrom, 1995:1). This cooperation has come in the form of institutions, organisations and regimes.

What is obvious in the above analysis is that international institutions, organisations and regimes are relevant in the current interdependent system; all the theoretical perspectives agree that these entities are creations of the state to further their own goals and design institutions accordingly, and that transactions costs are much lower when everyone is subject to the same rules and norms. Even though realists may argue that international institutions only exist or are only as powerful as the states that created them allow them to be, there is a growing importance of these institutions maintaining world order (Keohane and Nye, 1998:148). One of the roles which institutions play is that of norm creators and entrepreneurs as well as information disseminators.

Most of today's interactions are multilateral in nature, within organisation or in regime creation, as a “deep organising principle” between more than three states conducting their recurrent pattern of cooperation. Middle powers have the propensity to use multilateral institutions as vehicles for their interests as they are given a bigger platform to challenge the hegemon of the day but also to aspire to higher levels of representation with these bodies (Nel, van der Westhuizen and Taylor, 2000).

One of the main arguments against multilateralism, in its most generic sense is one that supports the realist view that multilateralism is on the decline. This is best illustrated by the US's contempt at unilaterally entering Iraq and Afghanistan in ostensible disregard of the rest of the world. However it does not provide any adequate answers as to why so many countries have continued to seek membership in multilateral organisations, especially the United Nations, and why middle powers like South Africa have committed themselves reforming the existing structures

## CHAPTER THREE

### SOUTH AFRICA REAWAKENS – POST-APARTHEID FOREIGN POLICY

*In this sense, the birth of a new South African nation, like the rebirth of our continent, has been a long time in the making. Indeed, it has been in progress from the beginning of the conquest. In reality resistance, and the aspiration towards independence regained, have never died, even when they seemed to have been silenced.*

- President Nelson Mandela<sup>4</sup>

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The white minority government managed to isolate itself from the international community as a result of pursuing its oppressive domestic policy of apartheid, which denied full rights to the majority of its people. This abrasive policy was extended to the southern African region in the form of its destabilisation policy which eroded regional economic growth and development, bred poverty and corruption, causing resentment among neighbouring countries.

In 1994, South Africa was heralded as the “beacon of hope” in Africa after Nelson Mandela was elected as the first black president of South Africa (*The Star*, 10 May 1994). This election was regarded as the single most important event in the history of South Africa and Africa, due to the peaceful nature of its transition. In April 1999 Thabo Mbeki succeeded and became the second democratically elected President of South Africa.

During the tenure of both presidents, South Africa demonstrated its commitment to democratic governance and peaceful political change, and has become the most advanced democracy on the African continent. Compared to other African states who had acquired their freedom much earlier, South Africa’s industrial and economic development, along with its military capabilities, managed to break down the

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<sup>4</sup> Lecture by President Nelson Mandela at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies “Renewal and Renaissance – Towards a New World Order”, 11 July 1997

economic and political barriers which isolated the country from the rest of the world during apartheid. This has also encouraged the new government to aspire to both a position of regional political leadership and one of influence in international organisations.

This chapter provides a brief comparative analysis of South Africa's foreign policy during apartheid (1945-1990s) and in the post-apartheid period, over the last 15 years (1994-2007). Since SA foreign policy has many dimensions, only certain aspects are highlighted to get an overall picture of foreign policy orientation. A further comparison is drawn between Nelson Mandela (1994-1999) and Thabo Mbeki's (1999-2007) approach to foreign policy. Although there were no fundamental changes to foreign policy principles, visible differences could be noticed with regards to each leader's focus, strategy, style, and tactic.

### **3.2 FOREIGN POLICY DEFINED**

Nel and Van der Westhuizen (2004:1) have observed that, "[f]oreign policy is usually conceived of as the sum total of the official plans and initiatives taken by a country with respect to its external environment, plus the values and attitudes that underlie these plans and initiatives."

As a working definition for this study, foreign policy can be defined as a set of principles and objectives informed by national interests that are pursued in an attempt to position a country in the international arena in order to protect and advance these interests.

Governments therefore attempt to achieve national security, the promotion of political and economic autonomy, enhancing public welfare and status or prestige through its foreign policy (Vale and Mpaisha, 1999:98). The practice of foreign policy is based on setting objectives, intents and implementation. The scholarship of foreign policy is descriptive, analytical and evaluative. By looking at foreign policy decisions, policies and interactions between state and non-state actors this study is *descriptive*. It is *analytical* as it is informed by theory and the conscious adoption of a certain conceptual framework and *evaluative* as it involves the use and application of certain normative values, principles with which to judge foreign policy actions (Gerner,

1995:18). The study of foreign policy has thus been described as “somewhat unusual”, as it “deals with both domestic and international arenas, jumping from individual to state to systemic levels of analysis and attempts to integrate all of these aspects into a coherent whole” (Gerner, 1995:17)

First generation analysis (1950s) focused on the state as the main actor in foreign policy, however after the Cold War (from the 1980s onwards), second generation traditions emerged and took into account multiple agendas and actors, on various levels of analysis (Mingst, 1995:230, 232). This tradition was multi-disciplinary, and looked at foreign policy as a process and not just as outcomes, where epistemologies and methodologies varied (Mingst 1995: 232). Foreign policy was no longer viewed as static or fixed but is always changing or shifting.

There are a number of factors influencing the development and implementation of foreign policy. A state’s domestic environment, which includes its economic and military capabilities, or perceptions thereof, along with interlinkages with friends and enemies greatly impact upon foreign policy development. A plethora of non-state actors also influence foreign policies, actions, and intentions. Such non-state actors include non-governmental organisations, inter-governmental organisations, and trans-national corporations (Mingst, 1995: 234, Vale and Mphaisha, 1999:92). Foreign policy is coloured by the way in which states interact with, adjust to, and react to such actors and the environment external to their borders. Nonetheless, the protection and advancement of national interest is the driving force behind most foreign policies (Evans and Grant, 1995: 33).

### **3.3 SOUTH AFRICAN FOREIGN POLICY BEFORE APRIL 1994**

The Apartheid government’s foreign policy-making was described as an “oligarchic-bureaucratic” process (Geldenhuys, 1984:2). Since 1948 foreign policy was ideologically driven by the domestic policy of racial discrimination (Hughes, 2004:10) and was concentrated in the hands of the Prime Ministers (State President from 1984), the Foreign and Defence ministers and their senior officials, the military, and the intelligence agencies. Very little input was given by the white electorate, however pressure groups and certain government departments were asked to

contribute depending on the nature of the situation. Foreign policy also depicted a lot of the personality of the ruling President (Barber and Barratt, 1990: 3-4).

In the years before the Second World War (WWII), South Africa had a good international standing, as it maintained strong links with Britain after independence and much of its international activities were conducted by General Jan Smuts, who himself was “experienced and esteemed” on the international political scene (Geldenhuys, 1984: 12). However, South Africa’s relations with the international community began to deteriorate by the end of World War Two, and received much condemnation especially from the United Nations for the country’s pursuance of discrimination and policies of “segregation” against the non-white population. International condemnation intensified when Apartheid was introduced as official policy in 1948, as membership within the United Nations was filled by newly independent African and Asian states. The anti-apartheid campaign spread vigorously, eventually isolating much of South Africa’s diplomatic activity. The country became a pariah within the international community when it was suspended from participating within the United Nations General Assembly and all other organisations. This diplomacy of isolation would last for four decades under the Afrikaner Nationalist regime (Geldenhuys, 1984: 12-13; Barber, 2004: 12; Spence, 2001b:3).

At the height of the Cold War, the apartheid government’s foreign policy was characterised as reactionary and tentative and placed its focus on bilateral relations, “as the sole means of surviving the international politics of exclusion” (Nel, Taylor and Van der Westhuizen, 2001:111). The United States depended on South Africa’s strategic position in the region in its fight against the spread of communism in Africa, hence sacrificing the US’s own domestic policies against racial discrimination. In contrast, the British government sympathised with the National Party government amid the growing international anti-apartheid campaign and was not yet ready to sacrifice economic ties by implementing sanctions (Pillay, 1999; Hall, 1999).

Exiled members of the African National Congress focused the organisation’s foreign relations on increasing this isolation by “publicising the injustices of apartheid” and pushed for sanctions, whilst also extending relations and forming political and ideological alliances with countries that supported the anti-apartheid cause. As



hostility or perceived “total onslaught” by pro-communist neighbouring countries increased against the South African apartheid regime, then state president P.W. Botha pursued a “totally national strategy” (1978-1989), which included the infamous regional “destabilization policy” and armed tactics (Barber, 2004: 20).

It was argued that the security agenda which dominated foreign policy was an attempt by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) (and its autonomous subsidiary, the State Security Council) to defend its position regarding its internal policy of apartheid abroad, but also to defend itself against the external pressures of sanctions and other forms of intervention (Henwood, 1997; Spence, 2001a: 4). A state of “unstable equilibrium” became apparent due to periodic internal political unrest and constant badgering of public and private actors, “compounded by the ANC’s policy of deepening South Africa’s isolation carrying to the world the UN declaration that apartheid was a *crime against humanity*” (Alden and Le Pere, 2003: 11-12; Spence, 2001b: 4).

As the Cold War came to an end and the “new world order” was being ushered in, changes were taking place in South Africa as well. By 1989, F.W. de Klerk succeeded P.W. Botha as president. Apartheid, the “universal symbol of racism and unjust discrimination” was eventually dismantled after F.W. de Klerk made his “unbanning speech” at the opening of the South African parliament in 1990. This resulted in the release of Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC), and other anti-apartheid movements (Henwood 1997; Barber, 2004).

### **3.4 SOUTH AFRICAN FOREIGN POLICY 1994-1999**

The shift of powers within South Africa occurred concurrently with the shift of power in the global system (Le Pere and van Nieuwkerk, 1999:198). With an international system in flux, the new South African government required a new foreign policy and had to reengage with all actors concerned, as well as adapt to the new synergies of a globalised world. This was required if the ANC’s strategy for development and social progress were to be successful (Van Wyk, 2004: 103).

For the South African government, its foreign policy therefore became an essential tool as an extension of its national policy and interests. The key element of the foreign

policy of President Nelson Mandela's administration was the reconstruction of the country's foreign policy but also establishing itself internationally (ANC Foreign Policy Document, 1996). The acceptance of South Africa back into the community of states necessitated increasing regionalisation in world politics, and the increasing importance of multilateralism in world affairs (Henwood, 1997).

The current foreign policy has its foundation grounded in the principles or "pillars" which were laid out in Nelson Mandela's article, "South Africa's Future Foreign Policy" published in *Foreign Affairs Journal* (1993). Certain principles (pillars) may have taken preference over the other depending on the situation at the time, but all actions taken by the Department of Foreign Affairs since 1994 and government in general are underpinned by the following and aim to provide a coherent framework for its actions:

- that issues of human rights are central to international relations and an understanding that they extend beyond the political, embracing the economic, social and environmental;
- that just and lasting solutions to the problems of humankind can only come through the promotion of democracy worldwide;
- that considerations of justice and respect for international law should guide the relations between nations;
- that peace is the goal for which all nations should strive, and where this breaks down, internationally agreed and nonviolent mechanisms, including effective arms-control regimes, must be employed;
- that the concerns and interests of the continent of Africa should be reflected in our foreign policy choices; and
- that economic development depends on growing regional and international economic cooperation in an interdependent world (Mandela, 1993:87)

Besides the article written in Foreign Affairs by Nelson Mandela in 1993, outlining a future foreign policy for South Africa, the ANC had also drafted two papers, "Foreign Policy Perspective in a Democratic South Africa" (1993, 1994) "reflecting the "ANC View" on foreign relations (Barber, 2004:88).

### **3.4.1 GOOD INTENTIONS, GLOBAL EXPECTATIONS AND OUTPUT**

The democratic dispensation under the leadership of Nelson Mandela was primarily focused on imperative domestic issues by promoting nation-building projects such as consolidation of the peaceful transitional arrangements, constitutionalism and the reconciliation process, and Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) (Monyae, 2004: 4). It also focused on the smooth re-entry of South Africa to the family of nations (Monyae, 2004: 4). As the then president noted, the irony of the country's late entry into international affairs was that it could "reap the fruits of a world redefining itself" (Nelson Mandela, 1995).

There was also a clear indication that South Africa was to be morally guided as a result of the ANC's own struggle for human dignity and equality during apartheid, and much of the international activities South Africa participated in were a result of (usually arbitrary) decisions made by the President (Barber, 2004:87). Promoting human rights became his guiding light but often contradicted its wider foreign policy. South African foreign policy from 1994 to early 1996 was thus labelled the "The South African Miracle", as it was personified by Nelson Mandela's iconic international personality (Van Wyk, 2004: 108).

The most common examples of Mandela's human rights activities but also contradictions include South Africa's stance on the two China's (PRC) ordeal and the 1995 Nigerian Human rights issue. South Africa's position on the China/Taiwan episode, was that of balancing its domestic economic interests and needs with regards to China's overwhelmingly speedy emergence as a political and economic super power (Schraeder, 2001:237) and its role as a "global moral crusader for human rights" (Van Wyk, 2004: 118; Bischoff, 1998:203-205). Taiwan was recognised by the previous government as an independent state and had also forged close relations with the ANC after 1990. However, despite China's atrocious human rights record, the Asian giant supported the liberation movement economically, so the new government was indebted, but it is also China's (PRC) permanent seat on the Security Council that motivated the new government to rather establish formal diplomatic relations with the PRC (Le Pere and Van Nieuwkerk, 1999: 208-211).

South Africa's leaders have always acknowledged that its future was dependent on the stability and development of the African continent as a whole, as President Mandela (1993: 89), asserted, "South Africa cannot escape its African destiny. If we do not devote our energies to this continent, we too could fall victim to the forces that have brought ruin to its various parts." The new democracy was viewed as "The Beacon of Hope" within the southern-African region and the continent of Africa as a whole (*The Star*, 10 May 1994). The developed nations of the North, especially the United States, expected South Africa to accept the role as a "pivotal" state, which is described as a state that "is so important regionally that its collapse would spell trans-boundary mayhem...A pivotal state's progress and stability, on the other hand would bolster its regions economic vitality and political soundness" (Le Pere, 1998: 1). South Africa as a resource rich, middle-income stable democracy was best positioned to influence its neighbours through broad economic and political linkages (Schoeman, 2003: 354).

The country's economy is highly diversified and technologically advanced, and capable of generating substantial amounts of investment capital, it dwarfs other African states (Van der Westhuizen, 1998: 436). The foundation of the economy is an industrial infrastructure with manufacturing industries. The economies of many Southern African states are dependent on South Africa's transportation system, particularly its rail network and port facilities. South Africa is one of world's and Africa's leading producer of a variety of strategic and industrial minerals, due to its vast mineral reserves (Barber, 2004: 178-180). Under apartheid South Africa was the dominant military power in Africa, and it remains potentially so today, and therefore an expectation that South Africa would emerge as a "continental peacemaker and keeper" (Barber, 2004: 85). The technological basis for South Africa's military superiority over other regional actors is a well-developed military-technical base whose capabilities far exceed those of any other African state (Van der Westhuizen, 1998:436).

However, leaders of African countries have perceived South Africa's position to be that of a hegemon, who has aspired leadership based on its political, economic and military strength. The country was regarded as a bully, causing havoc within the region, and therefore caused distrust amongst its neighbours (Van Nieuwkerk, 2004: 90). The South African government was wary and tried not to exert itself as hegemon

but as an equal. Nevertheless, the country's "heavy-handed" intervention in Lesotho in 1998 contradicted this position, as well as its stated preference for conflict resolution and peaceful settlement of disputes. The "Nigerian folly" was also a cause of much embarrassment to both Nelson Mandela and the country as a whole. This was a case in reverse where its promotion of human rights turned into a loss of face amongst its African counterparts. President Mandela's strong stance and attempt to get support for strong action against the Nigerian regime after the hanging of political dissidents saw South Africa move away from African solidarity and siding with London and Washington (Hamill and Lee, 2001: 38).

Foreign policy stances on disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and arms control under President Nelson Mandela were regarded as a "policy of moral multilateralism and global norm entrepreneurship" (Vickers, 2002: 81; Van Wyk, 2004: 118). "[T]he debates on South Africa's commitment to human rights, its allegedly Pro-western stance and accusations that foreign policy making is not sufficiently democratic, reflect the division between the internationalists wishing to advance human rights versus the mercantilists who tend to put economic necessity before anything else" (Van der Westhuizen, 1998:448).

"A central dimension of South Africa's normative role has been its promotion of rules-based multilateralism as the appropriate institutional form for conducting international affairs in what Mandela called an interdependent world" (Nel and Carlsnaes, 2006: 21). South African foreign policy-makers were trying to be as active as possible within international affairs, and take advantage of the international lime-light of the moral victory over apartheid. South Africa's activities were "premised upon the belief in the compatibility of human rights, solidarity politics and the country's own development needs" (Alden and Le Pere, 2003:11-12).

The channel in promoting these principles and one of the key aspects of the new South Africa's foreign policy was its immediate acceptance into the international arena. South Africa's representation abroad exploded and from May to December 1994, South Africa acceded to 16 multilateral organisations, including the United Nations (UN), The Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Organisation of African Unity (now the African Union), The Non-Aligned

Movement, and the Commonwealth. The South African government had also acceded to about 70 multilateral treaties and joined or rejoined more than 40 inter-governmental institutions (Nel, Taylor and Van der Westhuizen, 2000:1).

The foreign policy also reflected “universalism” in which the government tried to “de-ideologise” foreign policy, in order to establish relations with actors without implying support for domestic and international affairs (Van Wyk, 2004: 116). This *leitmotif* of “universality” or “universalism” governing South Africa’s foreign policy was essentially the opening of South Africa’s diplomatic doors to any state that would care to accept the former pariah (Mills, 1997). “It was to reflect the same reconciliatory spirit that characterised its own domestic transformation. The noble intentions and the affirmation of certain values in its foreign policy notwithstanding, their realisation and implementation in practice has proven to be an ongoing dilemma and a vexing problem” (Le Pere, 2004:4).

The country intended to use its strong relations with the North and solidarity with the South and to be a bridge between the two for greater cooperation with regards to global issues. It therefore maintained and cemented its relations with countries formerly known for their animosity towards Pretoria during apartheid. Most of these countries were in Africa, which included the “pariah” Libya, but also countries from the rest of the developing world - Iran, Syria, and Cuba (Evans, 1999: 623; Schraeder, 2001: 234). Relations with some of these countries have at the best of times put strain on South Africa relations with its Western counterparts as they are also countries who have not embraced the neo-liberal economic policies and democratic governance promoted by the North (Henwood, 1997).

South Africa’s clean slate was advantageous as it could adapt easily to the changes occurring in the international arena, however, it was apparent that the country’s officials were taking on too much too soon, and its international activities ended up in contradiction and incoherence. This was essentially true when foreign policy was based on public statements made by Nelson Mandela, instead of his statements reflecting a consensus opinion. Other factors which exacerbated the “lack of coordinated vision” in South African post-apartheid foreign policy, was the multiplicity of actors in foreign policy-making and issues which included

globalisation, global financial markets, regional and economic blocs, international trade linkages and multilateral governance (Alden and Le Perle, 2003: 15).

According to the South African Constitution (1996: Chapter 5), the President as Head of State and of the National Executive is responsible for receiving and recognising foreign diplomats, and appointing diplomatic representatives. Together with the cabinet, he also has executive authority to develop and implement national policy, prepare and initiate legislation, and coordinate the functions of all government departments. The main inadequacies were found within the implementation machinery, in this instance formulating and implementing foreign policy. The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), as an instrument of government did not have the resources, experience and skills behind them to deal with old and new issues, especially with regards to multilateral engagements (Alden and Le Pere, 2003: 16-17).

As the main authority managing South Africa's foreign relations, the DFA was debilitated by the internal divisions which existed between the apartheid 'old-order' officials and the new cadres from the liberation movements. The new regime considered to "break free from the diplomacy of isolation" and start gaining confidence from its neighbouring countries and solidifying its solidarity with both the developing world and Africa as a whole (Alden and Le Pere, 2003: 14).

"Inheriting and restructuring the Department of Foreign Affairs from the *ancien regime* proved to be a greater task than the new government had initially expected" (Van der Westhuizen, 1998: 444). It was imperative to create a common vision for the department, in order to execute a more coherent foreign policy. Yet, the highly educated, skilled and experienced staff undertook primary roles in the multilateral sector and senior posts abroad, which left the department with minimal experience to draw from. In an attempt to make the department more representative with respect to race, gender and ideology, the new government also wanted to integrate diplomats from the old homeland sector who staffed the ANC and Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC)<sup>5</sup> missions in exile. This caused a contradiction in decision-making processes not only because these diplomats had fewer skills but also brought along other

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<sup>5</sup> The PAC was a liberation movement in South Africa created in 1959, by the more radical and Africanist proponents of the ANC.

“ideological baggage” (Mills, 1997; Alden and le Perle, 2003:14; Hamill and Lee, 2001: 39).

Furthermore, a lack of communication and uniformity between departments existed between two of the more important departments assisting in South Africa’s positioning within international relations, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Department of Foreign Affairs, as the former handled most of South Africa’s bilateral and multilateral trade diplomacy, where its decisions would contradict and conflict with that of the wider foreign policy. Parliament which serves as the mouthpiece for the public and public watchdog and civil society which included a host of non-state actors (trade unions, human rights groups, academic think-tanks etc.) all presented opinions and inputs aimed at influencing foreign policy (Schraeder, 2001: 236-237; Alden and le Perle, 2003: 16-17).

And lastly, and probably the most criticised element of foreign policy, was the leadership of the reforming DFA. The late Alfred Nzo, the first Minister of Foreign Affairs and stalwart of the ANC, was not often praised for his performance and proactive policies and was viewed as “lacking in dynamism and vision” (Nathan, 2005: 361). With these structural and bureaucratic discrepancies, the post-apartheid foreign policy has come a long way to develop conceptual coherence, strategic direction and purpose. It also allows one to understand the chaos under which the department had to operate in getting South Africa functioning as a member of the international community internationally.

### **3.4.2 THE 1996 DISCUSSION PAPER**

In an attempt to delineate South Africa’s foreign policy goals and actions more clearly, the Department of Foreign Affairs in consultation with other government departments which included the Portfolio Committee on Foreign Affairs, Portfolio Committee on Trade and Industry, Public Enterprises and Foreign Affairs of the Senate drew up a document (Department of Foreign Affairs, 1996). The aptly called “Discussion paper”, consisted of a melange of accumulated updated policy papers and workshops on specific issues and therefore could by no means be expected to be a “fine tuned” foreign policy document. It had allowed interested parties an opportunity



to debate conflicting issues and participate in forging a new approach to foreign policy formulation (Henwood, 1997).

The paper considered South Africa's position as a respected "world citizen" in the international community, as well as the challenges it would face reengaging with the new world order and embracing globalisation and technological advancement. It maintained its initial pillars concerning the advancement of human rights and the promotion of democracy, and intention to support multilateral relations within smaller regimes and especially organisations such as the United Nations and all its agencies. It also aimed to "secure worldwide peace, promote disarmament, prevent genocide, restrict proliferation of nuclear arms of mass destruction and to achieve a new world security regime" (Department of Foreign Affairs, 1996).

The paper received a lot of criticism not because of its intent, but at the highly ambitious "pillars, cornerstones, principles and priorities" set out for South African foreign policy and the country's perceived role in its international activities. Greg Mills (1997), called the document an "ambitious, but misguided wish list for South African foreign policy", which undervalued the country's resources and capacity to act, which was ironic since the paper states at the beginning that "South Africa's policy initiatives should be modest and not overly ambitious" (Department of Foreign Affairs, 1996, Mills, 1997). This programme, according to Barber (2004: 118), failed to identify priorities and read like "minutes of a committee" in which all views had been recorded without distinguishing between them.

At the time it was doubtful whether the South African government would be able to live up to all of those expectations, yet it presented an opportunity to expose the shortcomings and divergent views regarding its foreign policy. The Discussion document remained a green paper, and has not been ratified as official policy or white paper. Its pillars, intentions and goals have been transferred to the succeeding government and have given its foreign policy direction.

### **3.4.3 PRESIDENT IN WAITING**

Thabo Mbeki was the natural choice to succeed Nelson Mandela as the next president of the Republic of South Africa, although there were certain political realities that restricted his political influence in vying for the position (Hamill, 1999). Mbeki's political career was based on dealing with international affairs, contributing greatly to the ANC's foreign policy drafting during apartheid and in the post-apartheid Government of National Unity (GNU) as deputy-president. Constitutionally, the deputy-president position was filled by two persons, Thabo Mbeki and F.W. de Klerk, and their roles were restricted to the duties set assigned to them by the President and were usually matters that the President could not attend to himself (Barber, 2004). Even though De Klerk led caucuses within the National Assembly, he was however, never invited to serve as acting president in the absence of Nelson Mandela, as "that honour was reserved for Mbeki" (Hamill, 1999).

After, the National Party had severed ties with the GNU in 1996, which dissolved the second deputy-president position, Thabo Mbeki was allowed more space to manoeuvre, and at the same time Nelson Mandela started to withdraw from the day to day business of government, handing the responsibility over to Mbeki (Barber, 2004:87). As de facto President, he strengthened the role of the deputy-president's office, creating a special unit which allowed him to directly influence government's political and economic policies and to attend to the inadequacies of the government's performance. "The department became the control room for all the functions of government, providing greater policy direction, guaranteed interdepartmental co-ordination, and more effectively evaluate the performance of individual departments" (Hamill, 1999).

Mbeki's reformist tendencies started at home with his influence over the domestic neo-liberal, market friendly, economic policy - The Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) as well as his promotion of the "African Destiny" in politics, economics and culture, and a constructive partnership with the West, principally the U.S., as the most appropriate means of achieving that goal (Evans, 1999: 625). His reconstructive influence continued within the ANC itself, after he was elected two years prematurely as president of the ANC in December 1997, even though Mandela remained State President until 1999 (Hamill, 1999).

### **3.5 SOUTH AFRICAN FOREIGN POLICY 1999-2007**

Foreign policy and engaging in international affairs was nothing new for Thabo Mbeki as he was instrumental in the ANC's fight against apartheid in the international arena, addressing the United Nations more than once notably during the Rivonia Trials, calling on the international community to assist in the fight against the racist white government. He also assisted in chartering the party's foreign policy and served as Oliver Tambo's (then ANC president) advisor on foreign policy between 1971 and the early 1990's. Thabo Mbeki led the efforts to raise the ANC's profile and standing both in Africa and abroad (Landsberg and Hlophe, 1999).

With this history of experience and also cognisant of the inconsistencies within previous foreign policy, President Mbeki attempted to consolidate both the foreign policy machinery and its foreign relations (Alden and Le Pere, 2003: 27). "Our starting point was the acceptance of the basic reality that foreign policy is a reflection of our domestic policy, and its major objective is to protect our national interests... Today the most important challenge facing us is the consolidation, deepening and strengthening of our non-racial and non-sexist democracy. To meet our objectives we must ensure that South Africa achieves sustainable economic development and prosperity which is people centred" (Pahad, 2000).

Even though South Africa was an economic giant on the African continent, forming part of the semi-periphery in the world economy (middle-income) and maintaining a medium human development ranking on the United Nations Development Programmes index, the president was still concerned with the domestic development challenges. The tensions between economic reforms such as privatisation on the one hand and alleviating poverty and job creation on the other remained just two of the many transitional difficulties the democracy still battled with (Bischoff, 2003, Van Nieuwkerk, 2004: 91). A highly unequal domestic distribution of wealth between rich white minority and poor black majority causes South Africa to have inequality which is of the highest in the world (UNDP, 2003).

Thabo Mbeki's role in international relations has been described as liberal and universal and his policy approach as pragmatic and reformist motivated by his neo-

pan-Africanism ideology (Olivier, 2003: 816). Hence, it was imperative to include its neighbours in building up Africa's capacity economically and politically to have strategic advantage in the globalised arena, as both South Africa and Africa reflected the same characteristics of poverty and inequality (Landsberg, 2005: 723). The new administration emphasised the importance of multilateral engagements with the industrial north and aimed to strengthen its relations with the developing South as a platform to address both the domestic and continental condition. South Africa's multilateral orientation achieved under the Mandela presidency continued under Mbeki but with greater thrust, launching his reformist multilateral drive to "counter the marginalisation of African in the global economy, and to effect some global reforms that [...] will benefit developing countries" (Nel, Taylor and Van der Westhuizen, 2001: 9).

President Mbeki summarised his "Global initiative" in his presidential budget vote speech in the National Assembly, 13 June 2000 as:

At the centre of all the engagements I have mentioned is the critical question of our time, of how humanity should respond to the irreversible process of globalisation while addressing the fundamental challenges that face the bulk of humanity. These include poverty, underdevelopment, the growing North-South gap, racism and xenophobia, gender discrimination, ill health, violent conflicts and the threat to the environment. These problems cannot be solved except in the context of the global human society to which we belong. We must and will continue actively to engage the rest of the world to make whatever contribution we can to ensure that the process of globalisation impacts positively on those, like the millions of our people, who are poor and in dire need of a better life. This engagement must necessarily address among things the restructuring of the UN, including the Security Council, a review of the functioning of such bodies as the IMF and the World Bank, the determination of agenda and the manner of operation of the WTO and an assessment of the role of the G7. Central to these processes must be the objective of reversing the marginalisation of Africa and the rest of the South, and therefore compensation for the reduction of national sovereignty by increasing the capacity of the South to impact on the system of global governance.

### **3.5.1 THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE**

The African Renaissance propagated by Thabo Mbeki since 1997, emerged as the defining foreign policy concept of the administration (Schraeder, 2001: 233). It is not a new concept but an ideal which Pan-Africanists envisioned as the renewal and

establishment of a United States of Africa, free from colonialism, apartheid and racism (Landsberg and Hlope, 1999: 3). Conversely, the African Renaissance pursued by the new government, was an attempt to counter the afro-pessimism that existed within and outside of Africa towards South Africa, and to promote South Africa as an African equal and not as a hegemon in finding African solutions for Africa (Evans, 1999:626; Landsberg and Hlope 1999: 12).

The consolidation and deepening of democracy was the main tenet of the African Renaissance, under which all of its other goals, such as peace and stability, economic vibrancy, education and the self assertion of Africans through cultural, traditional, spiritual, linguistic and so forth would follow. As Thabo Mbeki (1998) affirmed, “the region needs a radical expansion of the frontiers of democratic participation if it is to tap the initiative and intellect of its citizens, limit any tendency towards arbitrary rule and accelerate the integration of their regional economy into the economy of the world.” He further stated that the southern African region should “transform itself into a zone of peace, building stable democratic systems, position itself productively to exploit its considerable human and natural resources, organising itself to make a contribution to the challenge of peace, democracy, development and stability in the rest of our continent.”

The African Renaissance has encompassed South Africa’s foreign policy, as a process which would inform the every day business of foreign policy to bring about transformation internationally and within South Africa itself, “in essence, is a part of the broader struggle to achieve a just and new equitable world order” (Pahad, 2000). The role which South Africa was envisaged to play was that of a “bridgehead” of development in the region (Landsberg and Hlope, 1999; Schraeder, 2001: 233). At her first budget vote speech as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma (2000) declared, that the agenda of the African century for the African Renaissance would inform the programmes of the Ministry during her term of office and that, the policy and programme will rest on four broad pillars, which were development, peace and security, governance; and transformation of the related institutions.

### **3.5.2 FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MAKING – THE EVOLVING FOREIGN POLICY-MAKING AND IMPLEMENTATION MACHINERY**

Thabo Mbeki made changes to the existing bureaucratic and policy-making machinery, by reconciling South African diplomacy with its domestic policies in order to make the implementation of his new “African Renaissance” and global reform a smoother process (Alden and Le Pere, 2003: 27). By securing greater political control within the ANC, Thabo Mbeki had set off with a team of colleagues to “reshape the contours” of foreign policy and replace it with a “stronger sense of purpose and vision” (Alden and Le Pere, 2004:287).

President Thabo Mbeki, in addressing the opening of the ANC National Policy Conference in September 2002, said:

We can state without any fear of contradiction, that in less than one decade, we have transformed our country from being an international pariah, a negative force in favour of racism globally, reaction, destabilisation, aggression and war, to an important international player, for democracy, social progress, national independence and equality, and peace.

### **3.5.3 THE CHIKANE REPORT (2001)**

By setting up the Presidential Review Commission, President Mbeki planned to create integrated policy-making machinery. By 2001, the “Integrated democratic governance: a restructured presidency at work”, or simply the “Chikane report” was presented by the Director-General in the Presidency, Rev. Frank Chikane (Hughes, 2004: 16, Le Pere and Van Nieuwkerk, 2004: 129).

This report included several changes to be made to the national policy-making and administrative bodies and the main restructuring was to be that of the presidency (Van Nieuwkerk, 2006: 43) which would also be the locus of foreign policy formulation and decision-making. The presidency with a staff of 341 functioning as a cabinet office was committed to the “efficient and effective executive management of government by the president, together with the deputy president and cabinet...” (Chikane, 2001:7). Policy-making was starting to become more centralised, as the president, deputy president and minister without portfolio were brought together under the same office, and was served by the same integrated administrative unit

managed by one Director-general (DG) (van Nieuwkerk, 2006:43, Le Pere and Van Nieuwkerk, 2004: 129).

Resembling a clustered system of governance, the presidency was supported by six cabinet committees responsible for the social, economic, investment and employment, international relations, peace and security, justice, crime prevention and security; and the governance and administration sectors. This overhaul was to ensure a more coordinated working environment for all the various state actors, making the presidency the main policy making body (Le Pere and Van Nieuwkerk, 2004: 129).

In addition to the restructuring of the entire policy making structure and integrating the external and internal civil servants of the foreign affairs department (external and internal civil servants), government also managed to map out the service delivery commitments of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), under the supervision of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The document outlines the role, values and objectives of the department for the set financial year, identifying medium term goals, in the context of its mission statement of promoting and protecting South Africa's national interests and values, promoting the African Renaissance and creating a better life for all (Ntsaluba, 2005: 13).

#### **3.5.4 THE STRATEGIC PLAN IN ACTION – THE AFRICA AGENDA AND NORTH/SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION**

The Department of Foreign Affairs's Strategic Plan for the periods 2005-2008 and 2006-2009 reflected a more developmental approach to its foreign relations, greatly emphasising the government's commitment to its African Agenda, consolidating the African Renaissance as well as strengthening its South-South cooperation, guided by a vision of "a better South Africa in a better Africa and a better World, that is, a better life for all."

With the future of South Africa inextricably linked to that of Africa and the Global South<sup>6</sup>, multilateral initiatives such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development,

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<sup>6</sup> The "global South" is crucial to world politics and global governance. This group contains rising great powers and major centers of economic growth; many urgent security issues facing both developed

the African Union (AU), Pan African Parliament (PAP), African Peace and Security Council (APSC) and SADC were prioritised to drive regional cooperation, integration and leadership aspiration in order to transform the African environment (Alden and Le Pere, 2004:287). Strategically, South Africa strengthened its effort as part of the South-South Co-operation, as an initiative by the developing countries of the South to work in solidarity to address the challenges of marginalisation as a result of globalisation that is biased towards countries of the north (Dlamini Zuma, 2005). Its relations have manifested in the formation of the India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA), which serves to influence global power relations by working towards the linking of their economies and people. Africa and Asia partnership have been formalised to encourage business links, but also exchange of visits by journalists to improve understanding of each other's societies and MERCOSUR and strengthening of relations with South America and the African diaspora of the Caribbean (Department of Foreign Affairs, 2006).

These groupings of the South have managed to be extremely instrumental within the global arena however, and have always taken on a more antagonist relationship with the North, in effect, countries from the North and South rarely engaged in genuine dialogue and consensus building on development within the poorer countries and to address global economic and social imbalances. The new South Africa, as a middle power had established relationships with the main powers in the North and the South and as a bridge builder, the SA government has been able to involve the G8 in supporting many of its developmental projects as well as the North consisting of the more powerful developed nations with regards to resources and financial assistance (Department of Foreign Affairs, 2007).

As Thabo Mbeki reaffirmed in his speech as chair of the Non-Aligned Movement (1999):

it is vital that the NAM and the Group of 77 plus China should have a common, coordinated and strategic approach in their interactions with organisations of the North such as the G8 and European Union. We must ensure that the benefits of the twin processes of globalisation and liberalisation accrue to all of our

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and developing states; population problems and solutions; significant threats to global health; and development approaches that will profoundly affect the global environment



countries and peoples and that its potential threats and risks are accordingly mitigated...

### **3.6 SUMMARY**

The Mandela and Mbeki governments had respectively been expected to play a pivotal role within the continent of Africa. Some academics have argued the reason for this responsibility from the North, is to relieve them from carrying the continent on its back, and therefore passing the buck to South Africa. Both administrations however, have accepted this charge and have applied themselves and their various departments through various strategies in stabilising the continent and preparing it to take control of its own destiny. A more moral thrust through the promotion of human rights and respect of international law was the approach neglected by Nelson Mandela. Even though not always successful, his moral standing had personified the government's actions and therefore gave its call for an equal and reformed global system more substance.

However, more substantial engagement has been pursued by President Thabo Mbeki, through his pragmatic and reformist approach within foreign policy (Nel, 2006: 115). The African Renaissance has been the motivation to play a constructive and dynamic role in developing and highlighting the continent's plight, not as a hegemon but as a partner of like-minded African leaders. The Africa Agenda and NEPAD have now taken precedence in the South African government's greater foreign policy of strengthening multilateralism regionally, continentally and globally, as well as to cultivate a leadership position in multilateral institutions that is designed both to influence policy outcomes in these bodies and to reform their structure and process in favour of the needs of developing countries. "On a rhetorical level the United Nations and the values that underlie it (such as cooperation) proves strategically useful for the international orientation and goals of the government" (Cornelissen, 2006:29).

As a bridge builder, South Africa and Africa form part of the global village and the country's development cannot be achieved in isolation. "More generally, South Africa promotes multilateralism in the international system as the best means of maintaining global order, addressing global problems, mitigating the domination and unilateralism of powerful states, and empowering weaker countries" (Nathan, 2005: 365)

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SOUTH AFRICA AND THE UNITED NATIONS

*“It is my belief and that of our government that our task is to change ourselves and the world and to do so for the sake of developing countries and for the poor of the world, to work towards a more humane and inclusive approach to the world which really encompasses global governance in the spheres of world politics, economics and culture.... A more egalitarian society”*

- Van der Merwe<sup>7</sup>

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The first part of the chapter reviews South Africa's historical ties and participation in the United Nations during apartheid and post-apartheid. During apartheid, the United Nations played a pivotal role in isolating the white South African government from the international community, condemning apartheid as a crime against humanity and eventually relegating the country to pariah status. In 1994, then UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali welcomed South Africa back into the world community. The new South Africa displayed its orientation towards being a good global citizen and moral voice within Africa and of the developing world, which has manifested in hosting major United Nations conferences and heading certain bodies within the United Nations. This chapter will focus on South Africa's chairmanship of the UNCTAD (IX), and three important conferences, the UN AIDS conference, the UN World Conference against Racism, Xenophobia and Related Discrimination (WCAR) and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD).

In its leadership capacity within these forums South Africa, along with its partners of the South have emphasised the inequalities which exist due to globalisation between

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<sup>7</sup> Honourable Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of South Africa, Ms Sue van der Merwe, to Senior Students at Fuller Hall. University of Cape Town, Cape Town, 11 August 2005

the developed North and developing South, and have therefore called for the reform of the global system to a rules-based democratic global order.

This second part of the chapter has been divided into two main areas or themes of discussion. The first theme focuses on the Global Development Agenda and Africa, where South Africa has used its leverage as the moral voice for the developing world within the United Nations to draw attention to the plight of Africa, the developing world's increasing poverty, and the increasing marginalisation and lack of development on the agenda of the organisation. The South African government has persistently worked towards establishing a partnership between the United Nations and regional bodies such as the African Union in promoting good governance and development, which manifests in programmes such as the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD).

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have become the new global driving force, where South Africa has used its membership within smaller alliances to steer greater global initiatives which are to be met by 2015. The second area focuses on global governance, which will discuss South Africa's newly elected non-permanent (rotated) seat at the United Nations Security Council, and its campaign to reform the United Nations.

The rationale for choosing these areas are simply put as being the most consistent areas within foreign policy which have been mentioned in policy documents since 1994, amidst the criticism of an incoherent and ambiguous foreign policy. These strategic areas have been reaffirmed in President Thabo Mbeki's State of the Nation Address in 2007 and are closely associated with some of the key strategic areas identified in the Department of Foreign Affairs Strategic Plan 2006-2009.

#### **4.2 THE UNITED NATIONS – ORGANISED MULTILATERALISM**

“To most of the world, the United Nations symbolizes the hope for international peace and security through global cooperation, dialogue, and collective responses to security threats. The UN flag, as it flies over UN offices and peacekeeping missions around the world, is a constant reminder of this aspiration. The flag's blue field holds a lonely planet earth embraced by olive branches. This cloth was woven from the last

remaining threads of hope which had survived two devastating world wars” (Krasno, 2002: 3).

The United Nations has become the symbolic representation of the world’s need for cooperation and global understanding. It is the “embodiment of Multilateralism” and as an organisation has manifested as the central overarching authority” (The United Nations General Assembly, 1995 A/RES/50/49)<sup>8</sup>. From 50 “peace loving” member states in 1945, the organisation now consists of 192 independent states, making it the only global intergovernmental organisation with an almost universal membership (Joyner in Sills, 2002:3) unlike, its predecessor, the League of Nations, which was weakened by the lack of membership, especially that of the United States.

The idea of a coalition of “united nations” was initiated by the United States war time President F.D. Roosevelt towards the end of World War Two, based on the reconstitution of the failed League of Nation’s framework of consultation, peaceful settlement, however due to the League’s inability to prevent a second world war, the enforcement power would be given “teeth” (coercive measures) to prevent aggression (Krasno, 2002: 9). The organisation is thus based on the principle of collective security to maintain peace and security not only through coercive military means but also through economic sanction, to prevent a third world war but to also to “save the succeeding generations from the scourge of war” (The United Nations Charter, 1945). However, it also provides a forum for dialogue and an environment in which negotiation and diplomatic solutions are encouraged for pacific settlements of disputes (Krasno, 2004: 4). Although the new organisation was specifically focused on security issues, economic and social issues were also included under the competences of the organisation, as they deemed that problems of this nature had been the fundamental causes in previous conflicts (Krasno, 2002: 15).

As the “one, universal organization in the world today that can set globally accepted standards and norms of behaviour”, not only are the main bodies driving the organisations normative power but also its individual agencies, programmes, funds, and the international agreements (Sills, 2002: 1). The UN charter forms the basis for

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<sup>8</sup> Resolution on the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations Organisation

these norms and standards as a legally binding treaty of which its signatories have accepted to respect and conform to the values which have been cherished by humankind, like peace, harmony, cooperation and solidarity derived from the awareness of common humanity, and those which have evolved through the more recent strivings of humankind like fundamental freedoms, basic human rights, equity, and justice (UN Charter, Sills, 2002: 3).

The United Nations Organisation's core functions outlined in the Charter are as follows:

- To maintain peace and security and to manage the prevailing international order.
- To maintain the norms of equal rights and self-determination of peoples.
- To prevent a resurgence of causes of social upheaval and conflict by the development and rehabilitation work of the specialized agencies.

There are six principle organs of the United Nations which make up the core of the organisation, (The General Assembly, Security Council, Economic and Social Council, the Secretariat, International Court of Justice and the Trusteeship Council), all of which attempt to operate in its own capacity to enforce the norms of the UN and the above mentioned functions.

Two of the more prominent organs in maintaining peace and security are the General Assembly and Security Council *The General Assembly* is the world's forum for discussing matters affecting world peace and security, and for making recommendations concerning them. It has no power to enforce decisions. It is composed of the 51 original member nations and those admitted since, totaling 192. On important questions, including international peace and security, a two-thirds majority of those present and voting is required. Decisions on other questions are made by a simple majority. Emphasis is given to questions relating to international peace and security brought before it by members, the Security Council, or non-members. It also maintains a broad programme of international cooperation in economic, social, cultural, educational, and health fields, and for assisting in human rights and freedoms (Charter of the United Nations: Chapter IV, 1945)

*The Security Council* is the primary instrument for establishing and maintaining international peace. Its main purpose is to prevent war by settling disputes between nations. Under the charter, the council is permitted to dispatch a UN force to stop aggression. All member nations undertake to make available armed forces, assistance, and facilities to maintain international peace and security. The Security Council has 15 members. There are five permanent members: the United States, the Russian Federation, Britain, France, and China; and ten temporary members elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms, from five different regions of the world. Voting on procedural matters requires a nine-vote majority to carry (Charter of the United Nations: Chapter V). However, on questions of substance, the vote of each of the five permanent members is required. As of January 2007, the ten elected non-permanent members were Belgium, Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Indonesia, Italy, Panama, Peru, Qatar, Slovakia, and South Africa, however by January 2008 the terms of Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Peru, Qatar, and Slovakia will expire (United Nations Security Council, 2007).

As mentioned earlier, one of the other means the UN was meant to set about accomplishing this task was to try to root out causes of war through its activities in the economic, social, cultural and human rights fields. The work of the “other United Nations”, a term used to describe the Economic and Social Council, now spans a vast range of activities, including: the compiling and standardizing of statistical data, setting technical and legal standards in functional areas of global interaction, and conducting policy oriented research and analysis. On the humanitarian side it includes: promoting child survival, human rights and women’s equality, improving the livelihood and security of the poor, ensuring sustainable environmental management, supporting refugees and vulnerable social groups, preventing AIDS, fighting illicit drug trafficking, and providing emergency relief to victims of war, flood, drought and crop failure. This list is by no means exhaustive (Fomerand, 2003:1).

The developmental work of the United Nations can be grouped essentially into four broad categories: 1) policy and analytical undertakings which provide the underpinning for intergovernmental deliberations; 2) facilitation of the efforts of member-states to set norms and standards and build consensus on a range of

international issues; 3) global advocacy on development issues; and 4) support of national development efforts through technical cooperation activities in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. These multifaceted tasks are carried out through a complex maze of institutions, which emerged over time without a pre-established blueprint and largely as a result of political pressures. The General Assembly along with its Second Committee (dealing with economic and social issues) and its Third Committee (humanitarian issues) stands at the apex of the system as the UN's supreme policy making organ. (Fomerand, 2003: 1-2)

The Charter contains extensive provisions in this regard. Furthermore, the United Nations established for this purpose a whole network of institutions, the UN system, which includes its Specialised Agencies, Regional Economic Commissions and other organisations and specialised institutions subsequently created by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The UNESCO Constitution describes this overall purpose of the Charter in a fundamental way. It says: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed. Formally, these bodies report to ECOSOC. In practice, ECOSOC exerts only a loose degree of coordination as the Agencies have their own governing bodies and separate budgets (Fomerand, 2003: 3).

#### **4.2.1 CHALLENGING THE UN**

The United Nations has remained resilient based on its principles and values as well as the legitimacy which its member states bestow on it. During the Cold War, multilateralism was waning, as the organisation and its members endured the power politics of the ideological warfare between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Security Council in constant deadlock highlighted the dilemma of unequal representation within the Security Council as well as the right to veto only by the Big 5 and the need to reform. The UN however, has been affected by the world system in flux and its structural inadequacies have been challenging the existence and importance of the organisation (Sills, 2002:35). Since the recognition of globalisation the nature of security (or insecurity) has changed and citizens of the world now face cross-border threats such as terrorism, global warming underdevelopment and inequality and food and water shortages, but has also increased the development gap between the wealthy and poor (Thakur, 2004: 67). This process emphasises the

changing contours of the international system and the changing nature of global governance. There is a greater need for cooperation and a common solution amongst member nations (Le Pere et al, 2008: 3).

The United Nations also found itself in a crisis of multilateralism with the terrorist attacks of 9/11, which also happened to be the opening day of the 56<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, and its inability to predict or react to it (Sills, 2002:33). In addition, the unilateral action taken by the United States against Iraq had broken down the international consensus over the issue of international terrorism and left the United Nations and the international system profoundly shaken.

The United State's action within the United Nations proves perfectly the point argued by Caporaso (1993: 54) and Martin (1993), that multilateral institutions and the institution of multilateralism do not always mirror one another. This being said, "multilateral organizations may provide arenas within which actors learn to alter perceptions of interests and beliefs", however, the "institution of multilateralism may in turn spawn, maintain, alter and undermine specific organizations" (Caporaso, 1993: 54). Puchala (2005: 571) argues that the United States hegemony extends beyond the economic ascendancy and management of the international economy as explained by hegemonic stability theory, but includes "rule making and management in areas of the international development security and peacekeeping, state building, national building, democratic transition and human rights." The United States has used the UN to legitimise its actions around the world, by pursuing its goals through its right to veto in the Security Council and by holding the organisation ransom for access to its resources. As an American borne concept, many view the UN as "the servant of the long standing US hegemony" (Puchala, 2005: 573-574). At present the United States foreign policy behaviour favours unilateral action or bilateral relations as opposed to multilateralism in international affairs, and has received criticism largely from the South who have instilled faith in the UN, blaming the US "to be foisting institutions and values on the rest of the world, particularly those concerning economic liberalism, and narrowly conceived notion of democratization, and using the UN to enforce this agenda" (Puchala, 2005:575)



Nevertheless, the world is going through a period of flux where global power is shifting eastwards and southwards, because developing countries such as China and India are starting to emerge as potential powerful actors (The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2006). Countries from the South continue to play an instrumental role in driving development and structural change in the United Nations. They were also able to set up an enlarged disarmament committee, a committee (of twenty-four) on decolonisation, a special committee on apartheid, and UNCTAD (Morphet, 2004: 525).

The importance of the United Nations in the international system is reaffirmed by Kofi Annan (2004), as:

Are you right in believing that the UN matters? I think you are, because the UN offers the best hope of a stable world and a broadly equitable world order, based on generally accepted rules. That statement has been much questioned in the past year. But recent events have reaffirmed, and even strengthened, its validity. A rule-based system is in the interest of all countries — especially today. Globalisation has shrunk the world. The very openness, which is such an important feature of today's successful societies, makes deadly weapons relatively easy to obtain, and terrorists relatively difficult to restrain. Today, the strong feel almost as vulnerable to the weak as the weak feel vulnerable to the strong. So it is in the interest of every country to have international rules and abide by them. And such a system can only work if, in devising and applying the rules, the legitimate interests of all countries are accommodated, and decisions are reached collectively. That is the essence of multilateralism, and the founding principle of the United Nations.

### **4.3 SOUTH AFRICA'S PARTICIPATION AT THE UNITED NATIONS PRE-1994**

South Africa had been a signatory to the “Covenant” of the League of Nations, as much as it was a signatory and contributor to its successor, the United Nations Organisation and its Charter in 1945. Both organisations were created with the purpose to promote international co-operation and to achieve international peace and security. South Africa's international standing was grounded by the status of General Jan Smuts and his contribution to the war effort. Smuts' involvement in the international arena was one of great irony, in that he had assisted in the chartering of

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<sup>9</sup> The League's charter, known as the Covenant, was approved as part of the Treaty of Versailles at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. South Africa was one of the 32 original members and signatories to the Treaty of Peace (United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) Library: <http://www.unog.ch/>)

the UN preamble and was a passionate advocate of human rights and promoter on international reconciliation (Marshall, 2000:5), however at home in South Africa the non-white population were becoming disgruntled with their political and economic marginalisation.

The Native Representative Council, the African National Congress (ANC), the Transvaal Indian Council and other organisations had been instrumental in pushing for these grievances to be attended to. In August 1946, after WWII, Jan Smuts established the Fagan Commission, which investigated the laws relating to urban Blacks, pass laws, and the socio-economic circumstances of migrant workers (Reddy, 1998). Even though the commission had founded and suggested in one of its three policies that there was an acceptance of the fact that Whites and the other races existed side by side in South Africa (in opposition to the belief that they were only temporary residents in White areas who should stay in their reserves) and that legislation and administration would have to take into account the differences between them, the South African government enforced its internal policies of Apartheid<sup>10</sup>.

#### **4.3.1 FROM PARAGON TO PARIAH<sup>11</sup>**

The South African Nationalist Party in 1948, pursued its apartheid ("separateness") policy through minority rule and sought the "separate development" of South Africa's races through institutionalised social, economic, political, and legal segregation of South African whites, blacks, Indians, and "Coloureds" (people of mixed race). The adoption of this domestic policy of discrimination marked the demise of South Africa as a respected and active member of the international community. South Africa "was on a collision course with the world community" (Geldenhuys, 1997:36), and its participation as a member of the United Nations became more uncomfortable as the General Assembly and Security Council took to more coercive measures to get the government to reconsider its policies (Hamill and Spence, 1997).

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<sup>10</sup> Apartheid was a rigorous and ideological formulation of attitudes, practices and law long in evidence in the white-ruled South Africa,

<sup>11</sup> Title used by Sarah Pienaar in Pienaar, S. 1987. *South Africa and international relations between the two world wars: the League of Nations dimension*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press

The issue of racial discrimination was first brought to the agenda of the United Nations in 1946<sup>12</sup> by the Indian Government regarding the treatment of people of Indian origin in the “Union of South Africa”, which resulted in resolution A/RES/44 (I) (1946) being passed by the General Assembly on 8 December 1946 (Reddy, 1991, Reddy, 1998). This resolution on the Indian matter was followed by a letter from Indian representatives to the United Nations in July 1948 recalling the previous resolution, as issues remained unresolved between the Union and India with regards to the “denial of human rights and fundamental freedoms, on purely racial grounds” and the Union’s commitment to the “policy of "apartheid", or racial segregation, and the domination of all non-white peoples by the Europeans” (A/577, 1948)<sup>13</sup> (Reddy, 1998). In each case brought forward to the General Assembly, the South African government appealed for the matter to be removed from the GA agenda as it was regarded as a matter of “domestic jurisdiction of South Africa” based on Chapter I (2), clause 7 of the UN charter, these appeals were rejected by the GA on all occasions.

On 2 December 1950, recalling its resolutions 44(I) and 265 (III) relating to the treatment of people of Indian origin in the Union of South Africa, the GA that "a policy of 'racial segregation' (apartheid) is necessarily based on doctrines of racial discrimination" (Resolution 395(V): 1950). The passive resistance campaign led by the ANC and South African Indian Congress (SAIA) continued in South Africa, seeing thousands being imprisoned for contravening laws. Thirteen Asian-African Member States requested the GA to consider "The question of race conflict in South Africa resulting from the policies of apartheid of the Government of the Union of South Africa” on the agenda of the seventh regular session of the UNGA (A/2183), recalling the Preamble of the United Nations and Article 1, paragraph 3, and Article 55 c of the Charter which proclaimed universal respect for, and the due observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms, without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.

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<sup>12</sup> A passive resistance campaign by the Indian community, led by Dr. Y.M. Dadoo and Dr. G.M. Naicke in response to the The Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act ("Ghetto Act") that was passed June of that year (<http://www.anc.org.za/un/un-chron.html>)

<sup>13</sup> Letter dated 12 July 1948 from the representative of India to the Secretary-General concerning the treatment of Indians in South Africa. A/577, 16 July 1948 (<http://www.undp.org.za/docs/apartheid/undocs1a.html#2>)

Towards the end of 1952, the General Assembly adopted resolution 616(VII) establishing a three-member Commission to study the racial situation in South Africa (United Nations Commission on the Racial Situation in the Union of South Africa - UNCORS) and the issue of apartheid appeared repeatedly on the GA's agenda thereafter. The apartheid government started withdrawing its memberships from the United Nations specialised agencies. The United Nations Educational and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO) was the first to be abandoned in 1955, in protest against the agencies activities against racial discrimination. By 27 November 1956, the government decided to maintain only token representation at the meetings of the GA and at the Headquarters of the UN. According to Eric Louw who was the Minister of External Affairs, this decision was taken due to the continued interference by the General Assembly in South Africa's domestic affairs in violation of Article 2, paragraph 7 of the Charter. (Reddy, 1998)

Efforts from the assembly became increasingly more determined during the period after 1960, which also saw the Security Council becoming involved. It is also during this period that the United Nations promotion of human rights and self-determination spurred on anti-colonial movements and demise of the old order and birth of the newly independent states in Africa and the rest of the developing world. These new states not only changed the composition of the UN, but also influenced the agenda of the international community (Bennett, 1955: 128).

After the Sharpeville massacre in 1961, both the GA and SC passed its first resolution deploring the policies of the Pretoria government and viewed the continuation thereof as a threat to international peace and security (Bennett, 1995:130; S/RES/134 (1960)). In 1962, the GA requested that member states take specific diplomatic and economic measures, separately or collectively and also established the "Special Committee against Apartheid". The Committee would eventually become the official watchdog, ensuring that apartheid remain under continuous consideration in the United Nations.

The General Assembly in 1973 declared apartheid a crime against humanity, upon adopting the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid. In that same year the GA, declared that the South African regime no longer held the right to represent the people of South Africa and recognised the

liberation movements recognised by the Organisation of African Unity as the authentic representatives of the overwhelmingly majority of the South African people (A/RES/3151 G (XXVIII), 1973). The ANC thus gained greater exposure and experience in the international arena, even though the party and its members were labelled as “terrorists” and exiled from South Africa in 1963. (Alden, 1993). However, continued pressure from both the Non-aligned Nations and OAU, saw South Africa eventually being excluded from participating in the General Assembly, as well as from most UN specialised agencies.<sup>14</sup> It was further expelled from other governmental and non-governmental organisations and conferences.

South Africa experienced between the 1970s and 1980s, what Deon Geldenhuys (1997: 38) distinguished as “enforced isolation”<sup>15</sup>, to ending apartheid. This form of isolation saw South Africa being boycotted in sports and culture, by the GA adopting the “International Declaration against Apartheid in Sports (1977), and International Convention Against Apartheid in Sports (1985), where sports teams were no longer welcome to participate in international events e.g. the Olympic Games (Cornelissen, 2006: 27). This was followed by consumer boycotts, with companies withdrawing from conducting business in the country, and prominent entertainers refusing to perform to segregated audiences.

A mandatory arms and oil embargo against South Africa was imposed by the Security Council in 1977. It was noted as the first time in the history of the United Nation’s that this action under Chapter VII of the Charter was undertaken by the UNSC against a member state (Frost, 1997: 243). By the late 1980s significant normative shifts pertaining to the unacceptability of practices, rules, and norms, advocating and allowing human rights abuses and racist policies occurred in the international arena. Various international agreements were signed during this period, opening the way for harsher actions against the apartheid state (Frost, 1997: 244). Previously untouchable, a state’s sovereignty was now challenged increasingly via international interventions to protect human rights, for instance. At the time, the UN Secretary General stated that a state’s individual sovereignty is replaced by a universal sovereignty, in that

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<sup>14</sup> The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) in 1963. and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 1964.

<sup>15</sup> the more effective approach out of four approaches (which Geldenhuys set out), [Geldenhuys, D. 1997: 38].

norms such as human rights had become universally accepted and thus challenged an individual states attitude towards its greater population, related to this were the emerging practices of states using multilateral institutions to promote human rights and democracy. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for example attached conditions to the granting of its loans. Moreover, multilateral institutions came to accept more and more responsibility for the domestic affairs of states via, for example, election monitoring, providing humanitarian aid and peacekeeping (Frost, 1997: 243-248).

#### **4.4 POST-1994 SOUTH AFRICA AT THE UNITED NATIONS**

The importance which the new South African government attached to the United Nations and its core principles was due to the role the organisation played not only as the primary vehicle for orchestrating international condemnation against apartheid but also providing “symbolic recognition of South Africa’s isolation in the international community” (Hamill and Spence, 1997:226). The principles and values defined through the Freedom Charter and its Constitution, reflect core values and principles vested in the charter of the United Nations which included a “democratic, peaceful, stable, prosperous, non-racist and non-sexist society with respect for human life, and which contributes to a world that is just and equitable” (Dlamini Zuma, 2005).

The new government also recognised the power of solidarity emanating from decolonised member states who also belonged to the OAU and NAM , who had worked together to coerce the various bodies to isolate the oppressive white government in every sphere, even throughout the ideological tensions of the Cold War between the super powers. The resilience and importance of the norm of human rights was strengthened and allowed for the world to recognise the injustices in one country (Dlamini-Zuma, 2006).

The global status of South Africa has since increased significantly through the participation and projection of its “soft power” in the United Nations bodies, agencies, conferences and General Assembly sessions. Soft power, as defined by Joseph Nye (in Van der Westhuizen, 2006: 138), is “cooperative power involving intangible power resources such as culture, ideology, and institutions”, which is usually used by

countries (emerging middle powers) who do not possess extreme power and material capabilities to bring about change within the international system or reform the system in itself'. South Africa as an emerging middle power has thus used its symbolic power with regards to its victory over the apartheid government to drive its greater foreign policy agenda within the United Nations.

In 1996 South Africa had the task of presidency of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD IX) serving a four-year term. In 1997, the country served as the vice-president of the United Nations General Assembly as well as becoming chair of the UN Commission on Human Rights for a three-year term. Pretoria then continued to be elected on the executive boards of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund. It also juggled chairing Session of the Preparatory Commission for the Implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test ban as well as sitting on the UN's Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's council (Cornelissen, 2006:29). SA was elected as vice-chairperson of the GA's Economic and Financial Committee in 2003. Since this committee is viewed as one of the more influential, it was regarded as a particularly significant achievement by the SA Government. Most recently South Africa was finally elected as a non-permanent African member of the Security Council (Cornelissen, 2006:29).

These multiple activities are a clear indication of South Africa ability to "punch above its weight" diplomatically. In its capacity as either president or chairman or member of either of the above mentioned bodies, South Africa has tried to intervene and support a particular position "in breaking a deadlock or securing the cooperation of the various parties to the multilateral initiative" (Nel, Taylor and Van der Westhuizen, 2001:3).

#### **4.4.1 UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCES**

Hosting United Nations conferences have been one of the main platforms for South Africa to project itself as the self-proclaimed voice of the developing world and also to pursue its reformist agenda, by challenging certain aspects of global governance without upsetting the greater structural power and order (Van der Westhuizen, 2006: 142; Nel et al, 2001). Conferences in general have been utilised as opportunities for norm-creation that were non-binding but widely accepted (Sills, 2002: 25). As Van

der Westhuizen (2006: 143) asserts, "...Pretoria's eagerness to host such events is explained by the need to sustain its symbolic influence as a leading spokesperson for the developing world, while for the purposes of domestic political consumption, demonstrating its commitment to the reformation of institutions of global governance".

Masumi Ono (2001: 175) observes:

The major United Nations global conferences of the 1990s focussed international attention on key aspects of global change and development...These conferences generated bold pronouncements, with much fanfare, set forth ambitious international agreed goals and commitments. But it is the implementation of these goals that will determine whether each conference is ultimately a success or failure. The United Nations, to play its part in the implementation, has to adapt to a major change in development strategies.

United Nations-sponsored global conferences usually draw a lot of attention from the media which helps to highlight the issue being discussed, the process helps to identify and analyse global problems and suggestions for solutions and also in formulating norms around this issue, for instance human rights. Sills (2002: 28-29) propounds that global conferences also provide a forum for reaching consensus on universal standards, their declarations provide a moral authority which strengthens grassroots efforts to build support for normative behaviour, they bring into the process the power of civil society (NGOs), not only to shape norms but also provide a constituency for consent and implementation and offers language through the declarations that can be used in the eventual codification of international norms in treaties or conventions adopted by participating states/actors.

South Africa has played host to three major conferences between 2000 and 2003, all of which served some significance to an emerging democratic South Africa into economic and diplomatic multilateralism. The first big initiative was South Africa's chairing of the Ninth United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD IX). In its leadership position South Africa tried to reaffirm, redirect and reactivate UNCTAD's position and its concerns of international market, multinational corporations, and address the disparity between developed nations and developing nations, by adopting the Midrand Declaration drafted by South Africa's



Alec Erwin who was also elected as the president of the forum for its tenure (Nel, Taylor and Van der Westhuizen, 2001: 4). With this declaration and by hosting the conference, South Africa sought positioning itself as a “go-between” and self-appointed role of bridge-builder, between the industrialised North and the developing South (Nel, Taylor and Van der Westhuizen 2001:30), and also provided a platform for the views of members to be heard and reflected on paper, “It is in this light that the Conference may be seen as a success: the fear of a zero-sum gain outcome was replaced with the benefits of a win-win outcome (Carim, 1996). Even though UNCTAD has been given greater impetus to continue with its mandate, the general trend of international trade bargaining groupings amongst the more prosperous member countries has taken off. Groupings such as the G20+ and the India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA), seem to be more successful in exerting pressure in international trade decision-making (Cornelissen, 2006:30).

In 2001 and 2002, South Africa continued to project itself as a “global destination of choice for negotiation and discussion” (Van der Westhuizen, 2006: 143) by hosting the United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Xenophobia and Related Discrimination (WCAR) and United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) respectively. The capacity and logistical arrangements of both these conferences had put South Africa on the map, but the “discordant nature and the contentions surrounding the conduct and outcomes of the conferences...exposed many of the limitations of South Africa’s efforts to place itself at the diplomatic forefront of the developing world” (Cornelissen, 2006). Although the outcome was not as expected, these two conferences provided another occasion and platform for South Africa to elevate issues of African marginalisation and the disparity within the international system.

#### **4.5 THE PROMOTION OF THE AFRICA AGENDA AND GLOBAL AGENDA REFORM**

South Africa has always been given the opportunity to voice its opinion and also given the scope to provide direction in pursuing certain actions. “Good international citizenship” takes its cue from an expanding agenda of global problems that no country can solve on its own” (Geldenhuys, 2006: 95). Common challenges are addressed through “global cooperation” typically under the aegis of multilateral organisations, and by means of international regime. “Good international citizenship

moderates the realist struggle for power by promoting a rule-governed international order, which in turn serves the security interest of middle powers, which lack significant military capabilities in global terms” (Evans, quoted in Geldenhuys, 2006: 95; Vickers, 2003: 31-2; Schoeman, 2003: 349-67).

“South Africa offers hope for all humanity so we cannot only strive for a better life for South Africa but we have to contribute to the ongoing struggle for a better world. That is what gives us the degree of moral authority in the world” (Dlamini Zuma, 2001).

South African motives are premised on the fact that all countries who do not form part of the developed North are destined the same fate of marginalisation and underdevelopment. As Aziz Pahad (2000) asserted, “[t]he developed countries must accept that there can be no islands of prosperity in a sea of poverty. They cannot feel secure and hope to continue to develop while many other countries in the world get poorer” (Pahad, 2000).

According to the Human Development Report (2006), sub-Saharan Africa is the only region which has not only stagnated with regards to the Human Development Index (HDI), but in which 18 countries had lower HDI scores in 2006 than in 1990. The African continent finds itself in this situation due to its inherited disadvantages of the global slave trade, colonialism, and multiple European backed commercial ventures which exploited the natural resources and wealth of the continent and left “scorched earth” which provided little institutional, infrastructural and human capital when African countries began to achieve independence during the past century (Osaghae, 1999, Southall, 1999).

The continent has also been negatively affected by post- Cold War politics; protracted conflicts, structural adjustment programmes and HIV/Aids pandemic have left the continent poorer than before. Unlike East Asia, which has enjoyed a dramatic reduction in the absolute number of people living in poverty over the last 15 years, sub Saharan Africa has seen dramatic increases in both the total number of poor people and the fraction of its population that is poor (Human Development Report, 2006: 265).

The sad reality is that the world's poor and exploited are largely people of colour. Bischoff (2006:152) therefore refers to the inequities in world development as "global apartheid" (not only in terms of geography but also in terms of colour) which obstructs the emancipation of most of humanity. "If global governance is to mean anything, it needs to be about democratizing international relations and deconstructing the global economic and colour divide" (Bischoff, 2006: 152).

But the problems of the continent persist - debt and inequitable trade are at the heart of Africa's problems and sometimes powerful elites within Africa collaborate with exploiters in the North at the detriment of their own nations. During the last half century, the economic performance of the developing world has been far from uniform. Developing countries were polarised into those that made great progress in catching up and those that were mired in economic stagnation. Many African countries belong to the second group.

At the Millennium Summit held in September 2000 in New York, representatives of 191 countries adopted the Millennium Declaration. Among the 191 representatives were 147 Heads of State or Heads of Government including African Heads of State. The Declaration focused on concerns arising from peace, security and development issues and covered areas including environment, human rights and the sound management of public affairs. The Declaration sought to integrate into one overall programme a variety of complementary and mutually reinforcing development goals (Report of the Secretary General, 2001). These goals and the development targets defined by the world conferences and summits of the 1990s are related but in some respects different. Recently, the various categories of goals were regrouped into the "Millennium Development Goals."

One year after states pledged to work towards attaining the MDGs, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, a vision and strategic framework for Africa's renewal was launched as a driver for African countries to move from long severe poverty, and consequently in reaching the MDGs. Thabo Mbeki, has been the principle architect behind NEPAD. As a multilateral forum for norm advocacy, NEPAD is premised on African states making commitments to good governance,

democracy, and human rights, coupled with an endeavour to prevent and resolve situations of conflict and instability in Africa (Geldenhuys, 2006:101).

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) has been the single most important development programme to be initiated on the African continent (Hughes, 2004: 73). The strategic framework document was developed from a mandate given to the five initiating Heads of State (Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa) and by the Organisation of the African Union (OAU) to develop an integrated socio-economic development framework for Africa. This framework launched in 2001, encourages the interaction between Africa and the "rest of the world, including industrial countries and multilateral organisation as a means of putting Africa on a high-growth path" (Hughes, 2004: 75).

With regard to the international community, a process of sustained engagement with world leaders and institutions has been pursued since 2001. These strategic interventions have led to draft of commitments in support of the implementation of the African Agenda and NEPAD, including the G8 Africa Action Plan, the Monterrey Consensus, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the November 2002 UN Declaration on support for the implementation of NEPAD and the Cairo Declaration (Hughes, 2004: 89-90). During a one-day High-Level Plenary meeting of the United Nations General Assembly during its 57th Regular Session in October 2002 discussing a wide range of development issues also focussed on NEPAD. Consequently, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on NEPAD that will create an annual agenda item in the General Assembly on NEPAD (United Nations Information Service, 2003).

It has been a huge task to engage the rest of Africa to ensure that South Africa is not perceived as exerting hegemonic pressure as a regional power, and has thus tried to base this initiative on "twin pillars of coalition and consensus" (Olivier, 2003: 822). As a purely "African" initiative and not a "project of former colonisers and racists", the AU established an African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), as a system of self assessment, and goes beyond norm advocacy to a multilateral supervisory function that might even involve an element of norm enforcement (Olivier, 2003: 818). However, the APRM was only instituted to monitor codes of economic and

corporate progress and not political performance, which has been viewed as self-defeating with regards to the NEPAD's promotion of democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance, which are requirements for sustainable development on the continent (Hughes, 2004: 96; Olivier, 2003:818).

South Africa has nonetheless remained committed to its African agenda and has thus found a larger platform to do its campaigning in eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable economic growth, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and the developing world, by consolidating relationships with the stronger more influential countries of the south and groupings such as the AU, the SADC, NAM, the Group of 77 and China (G77) and the Commonwealth. It has sought to encourage the pursuit of common positions and to encourage an audible collective voice within the UN system and multilateral fora.

During its tenure (January 2006-January 2007) as the chairman of the G77+ China, the South Africa government had already initiated and made great strides towards attaining certain aspects of its reformist agenda in democratising and legitimising multilateralism within the United Nations, and creating a platform for better achievement of its African agenda. In her statement on handing over the chairmanship of the G77+China, South African Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma (2007) highlighted the most salient achievements of the group's commitment to an equitable world system in 2006.

The Group of 77 plus China have continued to call for concerted multilateral action to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a means towards solving economic and social problems and promoting peace and security. The body also worked for the creation of an enabling international economic environment in order to support developing countries efforts to achieve sustained economic growth and sustainable development.

On achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the group stressed the fact that in spite of appropriate measures taken, and the tremendous efforts made by developing countries to build enabling environments for development, the support received from development partners is still insufficient for substantial economic growth and economic development. They emphasised the imperative need for the full and timely

implementation of all the outcomes of all major conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields in order to meet the MDGs target date of 2015.

“Yet, 2006 will also be remembered as the year in which we developing countries successfully withstood numerous attempts to divide us. Through our unity, we ensured that Member States adopted decisions that guaranteed the smooth and effective functioning of the United Nations and reflected the interests of developing countries” (Dlamini-Zuma, 2007)

In the South African Department of Foreign Affairs’s Strategic Plan 2006-2008, the South African government stated that it would continue to play a prominent role in terms of the UN’s budgetary and administrative activities to ensure that South Africa’s interests as well as those of the continent are adequately catered for in the UN budget.

By the means of consensus the G77+China was able to challenge the United States, Japan and the European Union, who had imposed a US\$ 950 million spending cap for 2006, with the United States refusing to contribute unless the UN adopted major managerial reforms of the organisation’s budget. In negotiating the 2005 spending cap on the UN Regular Budget, the Group of 77 and China ensured that the spending cap was lifted which guaranteed the continued financial solvency of the United Nations and enabled the Secretary-General to implement programmes and activities for the remainder of 2006 and 2007 (Lehmann and Mcclellan, 2006:2). This initiative also reminds one of the South African government’s commitments to support the United Nations and to strengthen multilateralism in its leadership role.

The Group of 77 and China also upheld the right of every Member State to pronounce on administrative and budgetary matters, irrespective of the size of their contributions, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations by sponsoring a resolution that their partners did not support. Through further dialogue and negotiation, the group also managed to ensure that the General Assembly adopted a second resolution on governance and oversight by consensus (Dlamini-Zuma, 2007).

On Secretariat and Management Reforms, the Group of 77 and China ensured the adoption of no fewer than five General Assembly resolutions addressing various issues including the increase in the representation of developing countries in the Secretariat, in particular at senior levels; the increase in access for vendors from developing countries in the United Nations procurement market; and the improvement of accountability by the Secretariat towards Member States in the use of resources and the implementation of mandates.

As stated by the Group of 77 and China: “We supported the establishment of a peacebuilding support office, the provision of resources required for the functioning of the Human Rights Council, the adoption of new accounting standards for the United Nations, improving the information and communication technology system of the United Nations, strengthening the procurement function of the Secretariat, increasing the level of the Working Capital Fund, and strengthening the oversight functions. We also set a framework for the consideration in 2007 of measures to reform the human resources management system and policies, oversight and accountability structures, and the procurement system ” (Zuma, 2007).

Since its readmission to the United Nations, and chairing various UN committees, South Africa had still not been elected to occupy a seat on the United Nations Security Council, until 16 October 2006, when the country was elected by the Member States of the United Nations General Assembly (GA) to serve in the Security Council as a non-permanent member for the period 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2008 (Wheeler, 2006; South Africa info, 2007).

South Africa’s candidature had previously been endorsed by the African Union as 186 States out of 192 voted in favour of South Africa. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) now comprised of fifteen member states, with the United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia and China as permanent seat holders and veto power, and for 2007-2008 non-permanent seats were filled by Congo, Ghana, South Africa, Panama, Peru, Qatar, Indonesia, Belgium, Italy and the Slovak Republic who are eligible for rotating one month UNSC presidency (UN General Assembly Resolution, GA/10516: 2006).

Membership of the Security Council has provided an opportunity to promote the South Africa's foreign policy and national interests, as well as to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security globally. This position also affords South Africa the opportunity to help promote multilateralism and respect for international law as the most appropriate means of achieving global political and economic stability. In particular South Africa would use its membership to help promote and advance the African agenda (Pahad, 2007).

South Africa however maintained to respect the system and work which the Security Council does by upholding the functions and powers of maintaining peace and security in accordance with the principles of the United Nations, investigating any dispute or situation which might lead to international friction, recommending methods of adjusting such disputes or the terms of settlement (Pahad, 2007).

Within this new position as non-permanent member and during its rotating tenure as President of the UNSC, South Africa had achieved some notable successes. As Co-chair of the Ad-Hoc Committee on Mandate Review, South Africa helped review the UNSC mandates with an eye toward eliminating or consolidating as per 2005 World Summit recommendations.

In an attempt to consolidate the African Agenda, South African decided to utilise its membership to initiate a further exploration of the relationship between the United Nations and regional, sub-regional organisations/arrangements – and in particular the African Union - in the maintenance of international peace and security, in terms of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter (Dlamini-Zuma, 2007; Nene, 2007) .

Minister Dlamini Zuma chaired a Ministerial open debate (28 March 2007) in the Security Council to launch the initiative. South Africa seemed successful in convincing the Security Council to request the Secretary-General to prepare a report setting out options for sharing the burden associated with peacekeeping between the UN and regional organisations. The initiative is also a direct response to the AU Summit decision that called upon the UN Security Council to find ways of deepening the partnership between regional organisations and the UN (Dlamini-Zuma, 2007; Nene, 2007) .



South Africa intends to sustain its initiative on Chapter VIII peacekeeping arrangements throughout its tenure of the Security Council, “We hope that out of this will emerge concrete ideas of enhancing this cooperation and a buy-in on methods of burden sharing” (Dlamini-Zuma, 2007; Nene, 2007).

Within its position as the President of the UNSC, South Africa notably revived a former practice of conducting regular briefings on UNSC work to the General Assembly and the international media. The delegation in New York conducted regular briefings to keep African countries fully informed of developments in the Security Council. The feedback provided by African countries also helped inform South African interventions in the Security Council. This was an effort to improve the Security Council’s transparency and accountability vis-à-vis the wider UN membership (Dlamini-Zuma, 2007).

South Africa managed to be successful in this new position, as it was promoting reform within in the UNSC by placing the plight of the African continent on the agenda, which resonates within its greater foreign policy; however, it was faced with a few issues which challenged its stance on other foreign policy objectives.

Most notably the political unrest in Myanmar, and the international communities condemnation at the Myanmar government for its violent actions and the unlawful detaining of political prisoners (Daw Aung San Suu Kyi), and the human rights abuses in using rape as a weapon of war notably, and had co-sponsored a draft resolution in January 2007 (UNSC Update Report, 2007; Wheeler, 2007).

As stated earlier, Nelson Mandela had ardently pursued issues of human rights during his presidential tenure and had set a precedent for a South African moral high within its foreign policy, continuing as one of the main objectives of the incumbent Mbeki government. However, since then South African stance on the situation, before and after the 1994 democratic elections had been less vocal.

When a UNSC draft-resolution concerning the plight of the Myanmar people appeared on the agenda for voting at the Security Council on 12 January, South Africa had caused an outcry from many within the international community and at home, by voting against the resolution. The country’s aligned its vote with China and Russia,

who as permanent members (and also known for their poor human rights record) of double vetoed the resolution, instead of aligning itself with either of the two other African non-permanent members who did not vote against the resolution (Associated Press, 1997; Wheeler, 2007).

In an attempt to redeem itself from any scorn, the South African delegation echoed China's argument, saying that the situation in Myanmar did not constitute as a threat to international or regional insecurity based the on regular consultations with The Association Of South Asian Nations (ASEAN) even though Indonesia decided to abstain and not oppose the resolution (Wheeler, 2007) who had been actively campaigning for human rights in Burma). Even though South Africa was "deeply concerned" about the situation in Myanmar, it felt that a Security Council resolution would encroach on the competencies of the UN Human Rights Council, which was the best suited forum to deal with the issues at hand (Wheeler, 2007; Pahad. 2007).

Another a cause of concern, was that an agreed common African position was non-existent, Congo (Brazzaville) who represented the Chair of the AU abstained, and Ghana voted in favour of the resolution based on the African Union position of not recognising military regimes who come into power through military coups (in Africa) (Wheeler, 2007).

Observers have argued that South Africa's legal and technical approach to the situation was reminiscent of the Apartheid government. As anti-apartheid activist and South African Nobel Peace laureate Emeritus Archbishop Desmond Tutu, stated, "... [i]f others had used the arguments we are using today when we asked them for their support against apartheid, we might still have been unfree," and that's its vote had left "[t] he tyrannical military regime is gloating, and we sided with them," (Hoagland, 2007). Had South Africa abstained the country would have saved some face, whilst still maintaining its attempts at UN reformation.

Once again South Africa's foreign policy goals appeared in contradiction and incoherent based on its support for human rights but also its drive to reform the United Nations machinery. The country's election to the Security seat should have reaffirmed rather than eroded the country's moral high ground.

Nonetheless, South Africa had supported a recent decision by the United Nations Security Council to dispatch UN special envoy Ibrahim Gambari to Myanmar to evaluate the situation in Myanmar.

#### **4.6 UNITED NATIONS REFORM AND SECURITY COUNCIL SEAT**

“An entirely different global issue in which South Africa features as a norm advocate is the perennial one of reforming the United Nations” (Geldenuys, 2006:102). The ANC government has advocated the reform of the United Nations since it came into power in 1994, as one of the main structural reforms based on the norm of equality amongst nations as prescribed in the UN Charter. As Nelson Mandela asserted, for an accountable and democratic organisation and even distribution of power, the UN should reconsider its structure based on great power politics. This is especially true with regards to the Security Council, as South Africa has made no secret of its aspirations of wanting a “permanent presence at the global high table where major rules of world politics are made and enforced” (Geldenuys, 2006:102).

South Africa has pursued its UN reform canvassing through the IBSA tri-alliance. The troika believes that the reform of the United Nations should allow a stronger role for the developing countries as they make up the majority of UN members. Their stance on reform is typical of reformist middlepowership in that they do not want to transform the entire world order to privilege these countries. However, the troika does wish to maintain the existing international order but with respect to international law, strengthen the United Nations and the Security Council and to prioritise the exercise of diplomacy as means to maintain international peace and security (Brasilia Declaration -BSD, clause 3: 2003).

Therefore, the South Africa and the two other IBSA governments argue that the UNSC must be expanded to include developing countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America to make it more democratic, legitimate, representative and responsive. In their Joint Summit Declaration the IBSA, September 2006, the three leaders highlighted their commitment to multilateralism and the preeminent role of the United Nations (BSD, clause 7). Similar positions have been articulated regarding IMF's legitimacy depending on a reform of quotas being more representative of the developing world.

However, in UNSC related matters subtle differences emerge: India and Brazil have been explicit regarding their mutual support for each other's candidacy for permanent membership as members of the G4 (with Germany and Japan). India and Brazil invited South Africa to join the group, but the country had to abide by African Union guidelines, preventing it from fielding its candidacy on its own (BuaNews, 2006). However, IBSA's global justice discourse is doubtful, since the expansion of the UNSC would privilege only a few players. In order to achieve a lasting democratisation of the organisation, the General Assembly would have to be strengthened.

South Africa had played an important role in reforming the United Nations' Commission on Human Rights into the now elevated Human Rights Council, under the General Assembly Resolution GA 60/251. As the former Chairperson of the Non-Aligned Movement, South African Foreign Minister had called on the group of developing nations to push for a stronger and more effective Human Rights Council that would apply its mandate fairly and evenly across the board, "without glossing over violations committed in certain countries while focusing on others" (BuaNews, 2006). Dlamini-Zuma (BuaNews, 2006) said that, "The Human Rights Commission ended up being weak because instead of a true human rights commission, it became an extension of the foreign policy of certain countries." India, Brazil, and South Africa, were elected as members to the newly formed UN Human Rights Council in 2006. South Africa had agreed in Brasilia to coordinate their contributions to the Council and stressed their common understanding regarding the Council's agenda (universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The one challenge for the founding members would be to adopt a new agenda and working methods that reflected the importance of the right to development, as well as moral human rights issues such as the eradication of poverty and under-development. The African group believed the council would not be a "case of old wine in a new bottle," but would fulfill the aspirations of the international community.

When India and Brazil created the G4 lobby with Germany and Japan, to demand permanent UNSC seats they mainly wanted to improve their positions in the international power hierarchy. For the effective democratisation of the UN, a stronger role of the General Assembly allowing the participation of the global South would have been more adequate (UN reform watches, 2005). Furthermore South Africa could not share the G4 candidacies due to its regional obligations. However, an institutional reform of the UN that perpetuates the exclusion of Africa would contradict global justice and responsibility (BuaNews, 2006).

Even though South Africa has shown preference to the G-4 reform, it has to maintain its solidarity to its African counterparts by strengthening the Ezulwini Consensus adopted at the meeting of the Executive Council of the African Union, held in Addis Ababa in March 2005 (Khumalo, 2005). The African Union has highlighted the strengthening of the main organs of the United Nations. Regarding the General Assembly, the African Union believes that it must be strengthened to play its proper role as the most representative and democratic body within the UN system (Khumalo, 2005). The inter-governmental nature of the General Assembly should be reserved to ensure that it remains essentially a forum of inter-governmental dialogue. The African Union further believes that there is a need to improve on the balance of competence or relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council (Ikome and Samasuwo, 2005, 232). The ECOSOC should be strengthened in order to fulfil its role as the central mechanism for coordination of the activities of the UN system and its specialised agencies to enable it to play a pivotal role in furthering the achievement of the MDGs. On the matter of the reform and enlargement of the Security Council, Africa has expressed its preference to have not less than two permanent seats and five rotating non-permanent seats. The African Union has clearly stated that it seeks permanent seats that are truly permanent, that is, no different from the existing five permanent seats, and enjoying the same prerogatives and privileges, including the right of veto (Mantu, 2005).

#### 4.7 SUMMARY

The United Nations no longer serves as a tool for states to prevent a third world war exclusively by another state or group of states, but also to divert environmental, cultural, social and economic threats to the people within states. “One of the most important recent evolutions in the UN has been the changing focus of the Organization from a primary concern for national security to the inclusion of human security within the state...the responsibility of the state to protect its citizens, not just the immunity of the state from interference”, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) serve as an example of the new emphasis on human security” (Krasno, 2004:3).

More than a question of whether South Africa can afford to take on permanent Security Council status in the future is whether it can afford not to. If South Africa intends on assuming a leading role in the African Renaissance and becoming more active in the international arena, then it has to shift from a mindset that is largely preoccupied with domestic problems only.

In a theoretical sense, a broad approach to multilateralism is pursued by South Africa, and this shapes how the country behaves and sets objectives at the United Nations. Therefore, South Africa's participation at the UN can not be read in isolation from its wider multilateral politics. There is also a reflexive impact stemming from this, as South Africa's foreign policy can be said to be greatly influenced by its involvement in multilateral alliances of the south such as IBSA, G77+China and so forth.

Upon further theoretical application of multilateralism and middlepowership, South Africa's participation and behaviour at the UN is reflective of these theoretical explanations. First, by definition middle powers do seek to fulfil a bridging role in the international system, but they also often do this in their own national interests, and they have a keen sense of awareness of what their national interests are.

Second, middle powers often serve to legitimise the prevailing hegemonic order; although they may also (in a contradictory fashion) regard multilateralism as an important avenue to transform prevailing orders of world power.

Thirdly, middle powers operate more determinedly in the realm of norms, ideas and values, seeking to influence those. All of these are observable in South Africa's orientation to the United Nations. It also means, however, that there are contradictory impulses underlying SA's participation in the body, which could lead to an ambivalent positioning towards the body

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

#### **5.1 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

As the theoretical backdrop, this study has argued that international institutions play an important role in the international system. The proliferation of international institutions since the end of World War Two and even more so at the inception of globalisation is evidence of this. The levels of transnational exchange and communication have thus increased. Multilateral institutions are created in such a way that smaller states are not discriminated against as members and are allowed to exert some decision making based on same principles and rules of interaction (universal membership, everyone has equal rights). Secondly, all costs and benefits are shared between participants. Thirdly, there should be an element of “diffuse reciprocity.” Diffuse reciprocity implies that states do not rely on specific, quid-pro-quo exchanges, but on longer-term assurances of balance in their relations.

South Africa’s re-emergence coincided with that of globalisation. The new government realised that in the face of advancement in technology and globalisation, the greatest challenge faced by the majority in the developing world, including South Africa, was global poverty and underdevelopment. The gap between the have and the have-nots were widening, and in an interdependent world, this trend would eventually affect the domestic issues of South Africa. Due to its regional positioning and moral conduct of foreign policy, South Africa has emerged as a middle power, and multilateralism served as one of the cornerstones in foreign policy since 1994. It’s commitment to multilateralism, both normatively and diplomatically, has resonated in government rhetoric as well as policies and guidelines.

The Mbeki government has played a significant reformist role, trying to recast and challenge the multilateral order which would generally improve the fortunes of the developing world but also enhance the prospects of addressing Africa’s marginalisation. The country’s foreign policy objectives have resonated within their multilateral activity at the United Nations. It has been argued that South Africa’s



participation at the United Nations has been driven by the country's desire to showcase itself as a representative of the developing world and of Africa, in an attempt to increase its stature as a moral and African power and profile itself as a multilateral leader. And that South Africa has sought to model itself as a middle power through these multilateral engagements by challenging the present global and hegemonic order with its reformist policies.

However, it could be that the South African government realised that even though it was heralded as a miracle and allowed to punch above its weight in the international domain, South Africa would soon become "just another country." And its propensity to project its "soft power" in the United Nations bodies, agencies, conferences and General Assembly sessions, could be seen as another way to establish itself as a stronger player within the system. The South African government under the leadership of Thabo Mbeki have been successful in its international elevation and enabled the country to leverage its position to profile and promote issues of Africa's development and onto the global agenda. Through initiatives such as NEPAD, even though hampered by a lack of African consensus has at least gained support from the G8 and placed on the UN agenda.

The United Nations as an international organisation has the ability to shape the behaviour of its member states by the principles set out by the Charter of the United Nations. Each state as a member of the organisation agreed to abide to these principles upon becoming members. Both multilateralism and the UN's role have been challenged by both external and internal threats. Unilateral initiatives by the United States government have undermined the very principles of collective action in its attacks in Iraq, and have used the organisation to legitimise these actions. Most of the US's leverage within the organisation is its monetary contribution and has threatened on numerous occasions to withhold its member fees.

Emanating from this study is that the middle power concept has proven to be a good analytical tool to gauge the behaviour of countries which tend towards these immediate powers. Middle powers exert influence on the multilateral level, carving out a "diplomatic niche", and international organisations are usually the structures of choice as middle power have a better chance of building up consensus around certain

issues in the presence of big or more powerful countries. These actions strengthen rule-based systems and therefore limit any unilateral actions by bigger countries and in turn allow the smaller states to participate on an equal footing on the world stage.

As a middle power South Africa has created coalitions with like minded states in the South (IBSA, G77+, NAM) in order to see its policies and ideals endorsed. As a bridge builder between the developing South and developed North, South Africa and Africa form part of the global village and the country's development cannot be achieved in isolation. Even though South Africa has trouble gaining support from its African counterparts, within these alliances, with other regional powers like India and Brazil, who have been able to pursue their own national interests by strengthening trade and socio-cultural relations and also adhering to a common vision on reform and development.

South Africa has effectively been driving its national interests and the interests of developing countries to achieve the MDG's whilst pursuing NEPAD. It has also displayed its commitment to proper United Nations reform in the Myanmar case, where it was viewed as being insensitive to human rights violations by sticking to its principles around strengthening global governance.

The country was concerned with the situation in Myanmar, but maintained that issues on human rights should not be brought to the Security Council as the situation was not a threat to international peace and security, and that the Human Rights Council was the most appropriate body to deal with it. This decision was also based on the Non-aligned countries and the G77 and China's constant calls of concern at the UNSC's encroachment on mandates of other UN bodies

By lobbying for changes membership of groupings such as the AU, the SADC, NAM, the Group of 77 and China (G77), IBSA and the Commonwealth should be utilised to lobby for common positions and an audible collective voice within the UN system (DFA Strategic Plan 2006-2009).

## **5.2 AREAS FOR FUTURE STUDY**

This study made use of secondary data to observe how representatives of South Africa had articulated foreign policy objectives within its multilateral activity at the United Nations. Most of the data were retrieved from rhetoric in official statements made by foreign policy role players which has been helpful in reviewing important development in South Africa's role at the UN. However, further quantitative studies could be conducted by recording and analysing voting trends of South Africa within the major bodies of the UN, and compare them to stated foreign policy objectives. This will provide a more in-depth analysis, of the coherency of policy and actions. South Africa's voting data on particular issues can be compared to that of other major African countries and its allies in the South (i.e. Brazil, India etc.). In this way, one could articulate whether South Africa is committed to the African Renaissance and building stronger ties with its African peers to gain support for its development projects or in favour of building coalitions with its stronger partners in the developing world.

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